

The true Islamic Personality as defined in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*

By
Dr. Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi
الدكتور محمد علي الهاشمي

Translated by
Nasiruddin al-khattab



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شخصية المسلم

THE IDEAL MUSLIM

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah. Lord of the Worlds, and may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad and his Family and Companions.

Ideal Muslim: the true Islamic personality as defined by the Qur'ān and Sunnah presents a comprehensive overview of the way in which the Prophet (SAAS) and his Companions lived. This picture of the practical aspects of a truly Islamic lifestyle serves as a timely reminder for all of us. At a time when unIslamic and antiIslamic influences are spreading, via modern technology, to the heartlands of Islam and even to the remotest regions, we need to hold firm to the distinct character of our faith, as prescribed by Allah and revealed through His Prophet (SAAS).

Dr. Muhammad 'Ali al-Hāshimi presents a well-thought out guide to the Islamic lifestyle. He starts with the Muslim's relationship with his Lord, which is the most important aspect of his life, and provides the foundation for all his other relationships. From there, Dr. Hashimi outlines how the Muslim should relate to every person in his life, starting with himself and his family, and moving on, by stages, to encompass every member of the community or society. Each point is supported by extensive quotations from the Qur'ān and/or *ahādīth*.

It should be noted that while most of Islamic teaching - and certainly the central beliefs and practices ("pillars") - are incumbent upon men and women alike, some aspects of the faith

are emphasized more for one than the other, or may be applicable to just one of the sexes. An obvious example is the dress-code, where the emphasis is placed on women's attire, although it should not be forgotten that men are instructed to dress modestly too, and that certain prohibitions apply only to them (i.e., the wearing of gold and silk). A number of these "gender-specific" matters are discussed here, but the book should not be viewed as exclusive: men and women alike may learn much from it.

The interpretations of Qur'anic quotations have been taken from the translation by Yusuf Ali, except where indicated. The archaic style of Yusuf Ali's translation has here been amended and modernized, so that "thou" becomes "you," "goeth" becomes "goes," etc.

Many Islamic concepts are difficult to express in English, especially as words carry extensive cultural baggage. This is especially so with "religious" words which when rendered into English may convey connotations that do not exist in Arabic. For this reason, many Arabic words have been retained, with explanations either in the text or in the Glossary which is to be found at the end of the book.

May Allah reward the author for his efforts to educate the Muslims about their religion; may He cause this book to be a source of beneficial instruction; and may He guide us and keep us on the Straight Path.

Nasiruddin al-Khattab
March 1997

In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

O Allah, to You I offer praise and seek Your help and guidance. I send prayers and blessings upon your trustworthy Messenger and all his family and companions, and those who follow them in (all good deeds) until the Day of Judgement.

INTRODUCTION

My interest in the topic of the Muslim personality, as Islam meant it to be, goes back more than ten years, during which time I have noticed that many Muslims are often overzealous in some matters but negligent in others. For example, you might see a Muslim who insists on attending every prayer and standing in the front row, but he pays no heed to the bad smell emanating from his mouth or clothes; or he obeys and fears Allah, but does not take care to uphold the ties of kinship; or he devotes much time to worship and the pursuit of knowledge, but is neglecting his children's upbringing and does not know what they are reading or who their friends are; or he is taking good care of his children but is mistreating his parents; or he is looking after his parents but abusing his wife; or he is treating his wife and children with respect but is disturbing his neighbours; or he is paying attention to his own private affairs but ignoring his friends and the welfare of the Muslim community at large; or he is religious and pious, but heedless of the Islamic teachings regarding giving *salām*, consuming food and drink, and interacting with people.

It is strange that these shortcomings exist among some of those who are regarded as playing an active role in Islamic *da'wah* and who are involved in the propagation of a practical message that, in most cases, provides an awareness and understanding of Islamic teachings and values, following true guidance. Yet it seems that the overwhelming nature of their work, or perhaps carelessness or forgetfulness, has caused some Islamists to fall into the trap of these errors, whether knowingly or otherwise.

My interest in exploring the Muslim personality as Islam meant it to be, led me to consult Islamic sources that refer to man and how he is to be guided and moulded, so that I could present to the Muslims, especially those who are practising and active, a complete study of this personality, describing its distinguishing features and attitudes. It is hoped that this work may represent a beacon of guidance to those who are falling short in some respects, so that they may raise themselves up to the level that their true religion intended.

I was shocked when I realized how great a gulf exists between what Islam wants for the Muslims and what they want for themselves - except a few of them who are sincere in their faith, pure of heart and soul, and filled with ambition. These are the ones who are passionately devoted to their religion, drinking deeply from its pure spring and following its illustrious guidance more closely each day.

Whoever takes the time to study the guidance of Allah and His Prophet (SAAS), consulting the proper sources, i.e., the texts in the Qur'an and *Aḥādith*, will be amazed at how much comprehensive information is to be found there, dealing with both major and minor aspects of the individual's relationship with his Lord, his own self, and the people around him. All of this is guidance aimed at the edification of the Muslim and enabling him to enjoy an ideal life both as an individual and as a member of the larger society.

So it seems that the Muslim, as intended by these texts, is supposed to be a decent, social person, whom this unique combination of honourable characteristics distinguishes. These features are described in the Qur'an and *Aḥādith*, which present them as a religious obligation to be actively pursued by man in the hope of receiving reward from Allah.

So I began to compile and classify references from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. As I gathered more material, the subject became clearer and I was able to identify the following topics:

1. The Muslim and his Lord
2. The Muslim and his own self
3. The Muslim and his parents
4. The Muslim and his wife
5. The Muslim and his children
6. The Muslim and his relatives
7. The Muslim and his neighbour
8. The Muslim and his Muslim brothers and friends
9. The Muslim and his community/society

Through studying the wealth of knowledge contained in these sources, I realized the greatness of Allah's mercy to His servants, in that He has rescued them from error and sent them true guidance via His Messengers, Books and Laws, so that mankind may be shown the Straight Path and saved from stumbling and groping blindly in the dark.

Human beings are in great need of this guidance and education, so that they will be able to practise their humanity and play the role in this life that Allah intended them to play. Were it not for this Divine guidance, mankind would be left wallowing in the mire of selfishness, hatred, domination and oppression.

The evidence for this is apparent in the behaviour of the child, who strives to show his parents that he is better than his brother and seeks to deny that his brother has any of the same decent qualities to which he himself aspires. His natural inclination is to defeat his brother and prove that he is better.

This natural characteristic is essential to man's well-being, so long as it is moderate and is held in check. This inclination to prove himself motivates him to seek the best in himself: the great satisfaction he derives from realizing the good qualities he possesses encourages him to try even harder and achieve even greater things. But if this desire to prove oneself is exaggerated and allowed to get out of hand, it becomes a loathsome, dangerous illness which makes a person arrogant and boastful, treating his peers with disdain, although he is the farthest removed from the qualities he claims to possess. Here we can see the value of religion and education in controlling this sickness, reducing his self-admiration and pointing the way towards moderation, wisdom and humility.

Islam is the well-spring of all decency and honour in this life, and of the sound educational and moral principles, high values and good behaviour that have come down to us through the centuries from that pure, divine source.

Human beings are clearly more inclined towards looseness and ignorance than to seeking to adhere to that which is right, because it is easier to fall down than to lift oneself up, and to be lax than to follow the rules. So man needs a deterrent to warn him every time he forgets and his foot slips from the Straight Path. So thinkers and writers have a duty to explain these noble values and present them in an easily-understood and attractive fashion so that people will be able to develop the values and attitudes which Allah intended for them, thus enabling them to enjoy a decent and pleasant life.

Allah did not reveal this religion of Islam from above the seven heavens just for it to be the matter of theoretical discussions or sacred words through the recitation of which people might seek blessings without understanding their significance. Allah revealed

this religion to govern the life of the individual, the family and the society at large, to be a beacon that would lead the people out of darkness into light:

> **"There have come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book - wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light - guides them to a Path that is Straight."**
> [*al-Mā'idah* 5:15-16]

In the shade of this guidance, life becomes better, more pleasant and enjoyable. The first step towards this life of guidance and light involves the formation of a sincere Muslim individual who will present a vivid and beautiful picture of Islam, so that when people see him they will see true Islam, and when they deal with him their faith will increase.

This is what the Prophet (SAAS) did at the beginning of his *da'wah*, when his first step on the long road of Islam was to mould individuals who would embody Islam and become as it were "Qur'āns" walking on the face of the earth. Wherever they went in the world, they were a unique example of a unique way of life. When people saw this unique way of life embodied in sincere, believing individuals, they embraced this religion and entered Islam in crowds.

Humanity today, and the Muslims in particular, are in great need of such unique individuals without whom human life is unbearable, decent values cannot be upheld, and the true light of Islam cannot shine forth.

What does such a marvellous human example look like? This is the question that will be answered in the following pages.

I ask Allah to accept this work for His sake, and to benefit others through it and make it a help for me on **"the Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart."** [*al-Shu'arā'* 26:88-89]

Muḥammad 'Ali al-Hāshimī
Riyadh
27 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 1401 AH
1 May 1981 CE

CHAPTER 1

THE MUSLIM AND HIS LORD

The believer is alert

Islam requires of the Muslim, first and foremost, that he be a true and sincere believer in Allah, closely connected to Him, constantly remembering Him and putting his trust in Him, while making the effort to help himself. The Muslim should feel in the depths of his soul that he is in constant need of the help and support of Allah, no matter how much he may think he can do for himself.

The true and sincere Muslim is alert and open-minded to the magnificence of Allah's creation. He knows that it is Almighty Allah Who is in control of the affairs of the universe and of mankind. He recognizes the signs of His unlimited power in every aspect of creation, and so his faith in Allah increases, he remembers Him constantly and puts his trust in Him:

> **"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding - men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): 'Our**

Lord! Not for naught have You created (all) this! Glory to You! Give us salvation from the Penalty of the Fire.'" [*Āl 'Imrān* 3:190-191]

Obedient to the commands of his Lord

It comes as no surprise, then, that the sincere Muslim is humbly obedient to Allah in all matters. He never transgresses the limits, and he follows Allah's commands and guidance even when they are contrary to his own desires. The test of the Muslim's faith lies in this following of the commands of Allah and His Messenger (SAAS) in all matters, great and small, with no hesitation or reservation:

> "None of you [truly] believes until his inclination is in accordance with what I have brought."[1]

> **"But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction."** [*Al-Nisā'* 4:65]

It is the matter of absolute submission and complete obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Without both of these, there is no faith and no Islam. Therefore the sincere Muslim does not deviate from the guidance of Allah or ignore the commands of His Messenger, whether these concern him as an individual or those over whom he has authority and for whom he is responsible (i.e., the members of his family).

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[1]Al-Nawawi's *Forty Hadith*, Hadith No. 41 (p. 124).

He has a sense of responsibility for those under his authority

If any member of the Muslim's family is neglectful or failing in his or her duties towards Allah and His Messenger, then he is responsible:

> "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock (i.e., those over whom you have authority)." [Agreed upon]

The sense of responsibility that the sincere Muslim feels when a member of his family is failing in some important regard disturbs him greatly. He cannot bear it, so he will hasten to deal with its causes despite the consequences. The only one who can ignore such a responsibility and keep quiet about it is the man whose faith is weak and whose manhood is lacking.

He accepts the will and decree of Allah

The sincere Muslim is always content to accept the will and decree of Allah, remembering the *ḥadīth*:

> "How amazing is the affair of the Muslim! His affairs are all good. If he experiences ease, he is grateful, and that is good for him. If he experiences hardship, he faces it with patience and perseverance, and that is also good for him." [al-Bukhārī]

The sincere Muslim is convinced that belief in the will and decree of Allah is one of the pillars of faith. Whatever befalls him in life cannot have been avoided, because Allah has decreed it. His acceptance of the divine will and decree will earn him a great

reward from Allah, Who will count him as one of the successful, obedient believers.

This is why the *ḥadīth* says that the Muslim's affairs are all good. If he goes through a time of ease, he will give much thanks to his generous Lord for His bounty, and if he goes through a time of hardship he will bear it with patience and fortitude, following the commands of his Lord and accepting His will and decree. Whatever the case, it is truly good for him.

The one who turns to Allah in repentance

The Muslim may find himself becoming neglectful and slipping from the Straight Path, so that he may commit a sin which does not befit him as a humble and vigilant believer, but he will soon remember his Lord, turn away from his error and seek forgiveness for his failings:

> **"Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance when lo! They see (aright)!"**
> [*al-Aᶜrāf* 7:201]

The heart filled with love and fear of Allah will not be overcome by negligence. It is those who ignore Allah's commands and guidance who will be led astray. The heart of the sincere Muslim is ever eager to repent and seek forgiveness, and rejoices in obedience, guidance and the pleasure of Allah.

His main concern is the pleasure of his Lord

The sincere Muslim seeks to earn the pleasure of Allah in everything that he does. He is not concerned with seeking the approval of others, and indeed he may incur the wrath and hatred

of people in the course of his efforts to win divine favour, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah at the risk of displeasing the people, Allah will take care of him and protect him from them. But whoever seeks the pleasure of the people at the risk of angering Allah, Allah will abandon him to the care of the people."[1]

Consequently, he measures all his deeds against his desire to attain the pleasure of Allah, and will retain or discard any practice accordingly. Thus the Muslim will have appropriate standards, and the Straight Path will be clearly signposted for him. He will avoid falling into ridiculous contradictions whereby he obeys Allah in one matter and disobeys Him in another, or he regards something as *ḥalāl* one year and *ḥarām* the next. There is no room for contradictions as long as the standards are correct and the principles are sound.

One often notices people who pray devotedly in the mosque, then when one sees them in the marketplace, they are dealing with *ribā* (usury or interest), or if one sees them in the home, the street, the school or the neighbourhood, it is apparent that they are not applying the laws of Allah to their own selves, their wives, their children or any of those under their care. These people are afflicted by a severe misunderstanding of the reality of Islam, this holistic religion that in all affairs directs the Muslim towards a greater purpose, namely the pleasure of Allah, may He be glorified. This greater purpose leads the Muslim to measure all his deeds against the standards laid down by Allah. So these people would appear to be "semi-Muslims": they are Muslims in

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, al-Qaḍā'ī and Ibn 'Asākir. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

name only. This split personality is one of the greatest dangers that Muslims are currently facing.

He regularly performs the duties and good deeds required by Islam

The sincere Muslim performs all obligatory deeds and adheres to the pillars of Islam, completely and devotedly. He does not slacken, do it halfheartedly or seek excuses not to do it. So he establishes prayer, performing each of the five daily prayers on time, for prayer is the pillar of the faith - whoever establishes prayer establishes faith, and whoever neglects prayer destroys the faith.[1]

Prayer is the best of deeds, as is made clear in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) in which he said:

> "I asked the Messenger of Allah (SAAS): 'What deed is most loved by Allah?' He said, 'To offer each prayer as soon as it is due.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Treating one's parents with honour and respect.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, '*Jihād* for the sake of Allah.'" [Agreed upon]

Prayer is so important because it is a direct link between the servant and his Lord, in which he distances himself from the concerns of daily life and focuses himself entirely on his Lord, asking Him for help, guidance and perseverance to continue along the Straight Path. So it is hardly surprising that prayer is considered to be the best of deeds, because it is the source from

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[1]See *Ihyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*, 1/147

which the believer may replenish his *taqwā* and the spring in whose pure water he may cleanse himself of his sins.

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'What would you think if there were a river running by the door of any of you, and he bathed in it five times every day, would any trace of dirt be left on him?' The people said, 'There would be no trace of dirt on him.' He said: 'This is like the five daily prayers, through which Allah erases sin.'" [Agreed upon]

Jābir (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'The five daily prayers are like a deep river flowing by the door of any of you, in which he bathes five times each day.'" [Muslim]

Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) said:

> "A man kissed a woman, then he came to the Prophet (SAAS) and told him what he had done. Then Allah revealed the *āyah*: **'And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: for those things that are good remove those that are evil . . .'** [*Hūd* 11:114]. The man said, 'Does it apply to me?' The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'It applies to all of my *ummah*.'" [Agreed upon]

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'The five daily prayers, from Friday to Friday, are an expiation for the sins committed in the time between prayers, so long as no major sins (*kabā'ir*) are committed.'" [Muslim]

'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (RA) said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) saying: 'There is no Muslim man who, when the times for prayer comes, performs *wuḍū'* properly, concentrates on his prayer and bows correctly, but the prayer will be an expiation for the sins committed prior to it, so long as no major sin has been committed. This is the case until the end of time.'" [Muslim]

The *aḥādīth* and reports that extol the virtues of prayer and describe its importance and benefits are many. It is not possible to quote all of them here.

The devout Muslim tries to pray in the first *jamā'ah* in the mosque whenever he can, because the Prophet (SAAS) told us that "prayer offered in congregation (*jamā'ah*) is twenty-seven times better than prayer offered individually." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) said that the Muslim, "if he performs *wuḍū'* properly, then goes out with the sole intention of going to pray in the mosque, then for each step he takes, his status in Paradise will be raised by one degree, and one of his sins will be forgiven.[1]

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[1]For this reason, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (RA) used to take short strides when he went to the mosque, in order to to increase the number of steps he took, so that his reward would be increased accordingly.

When he prays, as long as he remains in his place of prayer and his *wuḍū'* does not become invalidated, the angels will continue to pray for him: 'O Allah, bless him, O Allah, have mercy on him.' He is regarded as being in a state of prayer so long as he is waiting for the prayer." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) spoke of the promise of Paradise for the one who is keen to pray in congregation in the mosque morning and evening:

> "Allah will prepare a place in Paradise for the one who goes to the mosque in the morning or in the evening, each time he goes to the mosque." [Agreed upon]

Consequently, the *Ṣaḥābah*, may Allah be pleased with them, were always eager to attend prayers in congregation. Referring to this, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA) said:

> "Whoever aspires to meet Allah as a Muslim, let him uphold the habit of attending prayers whenever the call to prayer is given. Allah has shown your Prophet (SAAS) the way of guidance, and these prayers (in the mosque) are part of that way. If you pray in your homes like this man who stayed in his home, then you have abandoned the *sunnah* of your Prophet, and if you have abandoned the *sunnah* of your Prophet, then you have gone astray. There was a time when the only type of person who would stay at home at the time of prayer was the one who was known to be a hypocrite. At that time, a man would be brought

supported[1] by two others, until he stood in the row of worshippers." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) was so concerned that people should attend the congregational prayers in the mosque that he wanted to burn down the houses of those who failed to join the congregation:

> "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, I wanted to give orders that wood should be gathered and brought to me, then I would have ordered the call to prayer to be given, and would have appointed a man to lead the prayer, then I would have gone to the ones who were absent from the congregation and burnt their houses down around them." [Agreed upon]

It comes as no surprise, then, to learn of Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, who in thirty years never saw the back of another man in the mosque, because he was always in the first row before the *adhān* (call to prayer). There are many such examples in the history of Islam.

Distance was no object for the *Ṣaḥābah*, who would attend the mosque whenever they heard the call to prayer, no matter how far their homes were from the mosque. The congregational prayer was so dear to them that they would even rejoice in the distance between their homes and the mosque, because each step they took to reach it would be recorded among the good deeds for which they would be rewarded.

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[1]This is referring to physical weakness or sickness, which did not prevent a person from attending the prayer in the mosque. [Author]

Ubayy ibn Ka'b (RA) said:

> "There was a man of the *Ansār* whose house was farther from the mosque than anyone else I knew, but he never missed a prayer! Someone asked him, 'Why do you not buy a donkey to ride when it is dark or it is very hot?' He said, 'I would not like my house to be next to the mosque, because I want my walking to the mosque then back home to my family to be recorded among my good deeds.' The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Allah has given all of that to you as a reward.'" [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) advised those *Sahābah* whose homes were far from the mosques not to move to houses that were nearer. He reassured them that their efforts to reach the mosque would be recorded among their good deeds, and that their many steps would not go to waste. Jābir (RA) said:

> "Some areas around the mosque became vacant, so Banū Salimah wanted to move there. When the Prophet (SAAS) heard about it, he told them, 'I have heard that you want to move near the mosque.' They said, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah, that is what we wanted to do.' He said, O Banū Salimah, stay where you are, so that your efforts to reach the mosque will be recorded among your good deeds.' They said, 'We would not like to have moved.'" [Muslim][1]

Abū Mūsā (RA) said:

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[1]Al-Bukhari reported a similar account from Anas.

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'The one who will receive the greatest reward for his prayer is the one who has come the farthest distance, and the one who waits to pray with the *imām* will receive a greater reward than the one who prays, then goes to sleep." [Agreed upon]

Believers are particularly encouraged, in several *aḥādīth*, to attend the congregational prayers in the morning and in the evening. The Prophet (SAAS) explained that there is a great reward for those who attend the mosque for these two prayers (*fajr* and '*ishā'*). It will suffice here to quote just two of these reports:

(1) 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (RA) said: "I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'Whoever prays '*ishā'*' in congregation, it is as if he stayed up half the night in prayer, and whoever prayed *fajr* in congregation, it is as if he spent the entire night in prayer.'" [Muslim]

(2) Abū Hurayrah (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: "No prayer is a greater burden on the *munāfiqīn* (hypocrites) than *fajr* and '*ishā'*. If they knew how much (blessing and reward) there is in them, they would come even if they had to crawl.'" [Agreed upon]

The devout Muslim who is keen to succeed in the Hereafter will not hesitate to perform as many *nāfil* (supererogatory) deeds as he can, night and day, because performing many *nāfil* deeds brings the servant closer to his Lord, and includes him among those who receive His divine help, as is referred to in the *ḥadīth qudsī*:

> ". . . My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I will love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he

> hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it." [al-Bukhari]

Because of Allah's love for His servants, the person will be loved by the inhabitants of heaven and earth, as is described in a report narrated by Abū Hurayrah, in which the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "When Allah loves one of His servants, he calls Jibrīl and tells him: 'I love so-and-so, so love him.' Then Jibrīl will love him, and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven: 'Allah loves so-and-so, so love him.' So the inhabitants of heaven will love him too, and he will be well accepted by the inhabitants of the earth. If Allah hates one of His servants, He calls Jibrīl and tells him: 'I hate so-and-so, so hate him.' Then Jibrīl will hate him and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven, 'Allah hates so-and-so, so hate him.' Then the inhabitants of heaven will hate him, and he will also be detested by the inhabitants of the earth." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to stay up at night in prayer, standing until his feet were swollen. 'Ā'ishah (RA) asked him: "Why are you doing this, O Messenger of Allah, when Allah has forgiven all your sins, past and future?" He replied, "Should I not be a grateful servant?" [al-Bukhari and Muslim]

The true Muslim tries to perform all his prayers perfectly. It is not merely the matter of going through the motions when the heart is empty and the mind is wandering.

When he has completed his prayer, the Muslim does not rush straight back into the hustle and bustle of daily life. Instead, he seeks forgiveness from Allah, and praises and glorifies Him in the manner prescribed in the *sunnah*. Then he turns to Almighty Allah in humble supplication, asking Him to guide him and to grant him the goodness of this world and the next. Thus, prayer plays its role in the purification of the heart and soul. For these reasons, the Prophet (SAAS) used to say: "The source of my deepest satisfaction is prayer."[1]

Those who pray sincerely and humbly are under the care and protection of Allah, so they do not fear when evil approaches, neither do they become miserly when something good befalls them:

> **"Truly man was created very impatient - fretful when evil touches him: and niggardly when good reaches him - Not so those devoted to Prayer . . . "** [*al-Ma'ārij* 70:19-22]

The true Muslim also pays *zakāt*, if he has enough wealth. He calculates the amount due, precisely and honestly, and pays it in a manner that is in accordance with the requirements of Islam. Even if he has to pay thousands or millions in *zakāt*, he would never think of an excuse not to do so.

This is because *zakāt* is a clearly-defined financial obligation that is also an act of worship. The sincere Muslim cannot afford to fail in this duty, which is prescribed by the *sharī'ah*. The Muslim who hesitates to pay it is lacking in his religion and has a miserly and twisted attitude. It suffices to note that it is permitted to fight the

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Nisa'i, with a *hasan isnād*.

one who withholds payment of *zakāt*, even to the point of killing him, until or unless he fulfils his obligation. The words of Abū Bakr (RA) concerning the apostates[1] echo down the centuries to us, reminding us of the connection that Islam makes between "religious" and "worldly" affairs: "I will fight whoever separates *ṣalāt* from *zakāt*." This declaration of Abū Bakr indicates that he had a sound understanding of the nature of this comprehensive, holistic religion, and of the close connection between *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*, as he had seen the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān revealed one after the other and emphasizing the connection between *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*:

> **". . .those who establish regular prayer and regular charity . . . "** [*al-Mā'idah* 5:55]

> **"And be steadfast in prayer: practise regular charity."** [*al-Baqarah* 2:43]

> **". . . [those who] . . . establish regular prayers and regular charity . . . "** [*al-Baqarah* 2:277]

The true Muslim fasts in Ramaḍān with the sincere intention of earning reward, and with his heart full of faith: "Whoever fasts Ramaḍān out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." [Agreed upon] He knows that the obligation to fast includes guarding his tongue, his sight, and all of his other faculties, so as to avoid committing any error which may invalidate his fast or cancel out his reward:

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[1]Apostates: following the death of the Prophet (SAAS), numerous Arabian tribes who had embraced Islam renounced the faith and rebelled. In particular, they refused to pay *zakāt*, although it was one of the central duties of the religion they had sworn to follow. Abu Bakr, as *khalīfah*, was responsible for bringing them back into Islam, and restoring order and stability to the Islamic state. [Translator]

> "When any of you is fasting, he should not utter foul words or raise his voice in anger. If then anyone provokes or fights him, he should say, 'I am observing a fast.'" [Agreed upon]

> "Whoever does not give up false speech and evil actions, Allah has no need of his giving up his food and drink." [al-Bukhārī]

The fasting Muslim is constantly aware that this is a month unlike any other: it is the month of fasting for the sake of Allah, and the reward of Allah, the Bountiful and Munificent, is greater and vaster than anyone could ever imagine:

> "The reward for every good deed of the sons of Adam will be multiplied anywhere between ten and seven hundred times. Allah said: 'Except for fasting, because it is for Me and I Myself will give recompense for it. He gives up his food and his passion for Me.' For the one who fasts, there are two times of rejoicing, one when he breaks his fast, and one when he meets his Lord. Verily the smell that comes from the mouth of one who is fasting is more pleasing to Allah than the scent of musk." [Muslim]

So the smart Muslim takes care to make the most of this blessed month. He fills its days with fasting, prayer, reading Qur'an, charity and other good works, and fills its nights with prayers, *tahajjud* and *du'ā's*:

> "Whoever spends the night in prayer during Ramaḍān out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." [Agreed upon]

The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to strive to do more good deeds during this month than at other times, and especially during the last ten days of it. 'Ā'ishah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to strive during Ramaḍān, and especially the last ten days of it, more than he used to at other times." [Muslim]

'Ā'ishah (RA) also said:

> "When the last ten days of Ramaḍān began, the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) would stay up for the whole night, wake his family up, strive extra hard, and abstain from marital relations." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) ordered Muslims to seek *laylat al-qadr* and encouraged them to spend this night in prayer:

> "Seek *laylat al-qadr* during the last ten days of Ramaḍān." [Agreed upon]

> "Seek *laylat al-qadr* in the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramaḍān." [al-Bukhārī]

> "Whoever spends the night of *laylat al-qadr* in prayer and worship out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." [Agreed upon]

So this blessed month is a time that is purely for worship. The serious-minded Muslim has no time to spend on chatting and idle pursuits throughout the night. He should not be among those who while away the night until dawn approaches, whereupon they have

something to eat and fall into a deep sleep, and even miss the *fajr* prayer!

The Muslim who truly understands his religion does not stay up late after he comes home from praying *tarāwīḥ*, because he knows that in a few short hours' time, he will have to get up again to pray *qiyām al-layl* and eat *suḥūr* (pre-dawn meal) before he goes out to the mosque to pray *fajr*.

The Prophet (SAAS) commanded Muslims to eat *suḥūr*, because there is much goodness in it. He said:

> "Eat *suḥūr*, for in *suḥūr* there is blessing." [Agreed upon]

This is because getting up for *suḥūr* reminds one to pray *qiyām al-layl*, and motivates one to go out to the mosque to pray *fajr* in congregation, in addition to the fact that it helps people to fast and that it is the *sunnah* of the Prophet (SAAS) that he also taught to his *Ṣaḥābah*. Zayd ibn Thābit (RA) said:

> "We ate *suḥūr* with the Messenger of Allah (SAAS), then we got up to pray." Someone asked, "How much time was there between the two?" He said, "Fifty *āyāt* (i.e., the time it would take to recite fifty *āyāt*)." [Agreed upon]

The devout Muslim does not neglect *nāfil* fasts at times other than Ramaḍān, such as the day of 'Arafāh, and the ninth and tenth days of Muḥarram. Fasting on these days is among the good deeds which can wipe out one's sins, as the Prophet (SAAS) explained. Abū Qutādah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was asked about fasting on the day of 'Arafāh, and he said: 'It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year and the current year.'" [Muslim]

Ibn 'Abbās said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) fasted on the day of 'Ashūrā' (the tenth day of Muḥarram) and commanded others to fast on this day too." [Agreed upon]

Abū Qutādah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was asked about fasting on the day of 'Ashūrā' and he said: 'It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year.'" [Muslim]

Ibn 'Abbās (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'If I am still alive next year, I will fast on the ninth day (of Muḥarram).'" [Muslim]

Fasting for six days of Shawwāl (the Islamic month immediately following Ramaḍān) is similarly encouraged, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever fasted Ramaḍān then followed it with six days of Shawwāl, it will be as if he fasted for a lifetime." [Muslim]

It is also recommended to fast for three days of each month, concerning which Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "My dearest friend (i.e., the Prophet (SAAS)) advised me to do three things: to fast for three days of each month, to pray two *rak'ahs* of *duḥā* prayer, and never to sleep until I pray *witr*." [Agreed upon]

Abū'l-Dardā' (RA) said:

> "My beloved friend (SAAS) advised me to do three things that I will never give up as long as I live: to fast three days of each month, to pray *duḥā*, and not to sleep until I have prayed *witr*." [Muslim]

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Fasting for three days each month is like fasting for an entire lifetime.'" [Agreed upon]

Some reports describe these days as being the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the month, which are called *al-ayyām al-bīḍ* (the white days); other reports state that the Prophet (SAAS) used to fast on three unspecified days of each month.

Mu'ādhah al-'Adawiyyah said:

> "I asked 'Ā'ishah (RA), 'Did the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to fast three days in each month?' She said, 'Yes.' I asked her, 'In which part of the month did he used to fast?' She said, 'He did not mind in which part of the month he would fast.'" [Muslim]

The conscientious Muslim intends to go on Ḥajj to the House of Allah when he is able to do so. Before he sets out on his journey

to the Holy Places, he studies the rules of Ḥajj in great detail, examining all its major and minor aspects, so that when he performs the rites of Ḥajj, his Ḥajj will be complete and correct. He fully understands the wisdom behind this great religious duty and feels his soul filled with the faith and joy of Islam. After completing Ḥajj successfully, he will return to his family and his country as free of sin as the day he was born, and filled with the awareness of the greatness of this religion that has gathered the nations of the earth around the House of Allah in a great international conference the like of which the world witnesses at no other time, where despite the differences in skin colour, nationality and language, the pilgrims are united in their response to the call of Allah and in their glorification and worship of Him, the One Almighty God.

He is a true servant of Allah

The Muslim firmly believes that his sole purpose in life is to serve his Lord:

> **"I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me."** [*al-Dhāriyāt* 51:56]

Serving and worshipping Allah may be accomplished through every deed of man that is aimed at building a civilization establishing the authority of Allah on earth and living according to His commandments. The awareness that he is a servant of Allah is deeply rooted in the heart of the Muslim, and is the starting-point for all his deeds, through which he seeks to earn the pleasure of Allah. So every deed a Muslim does may be as much an act of worship as the rituals of his religion, so long as his intention is to do these deeds for the sake of Allah.

The most important act of worship that Muslims can perform is to strive to establish the rule of Allah on earth, and to follow the way of life that He has prescribed, so that Islam will govern the life of the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

The sincere Muslim will feel that his worship is lacking if he does not strive to achieve the purpose for which Allah created *jinn* and men, namely promoting the supremacy of the authority of Allah on earth, which is the only way in which mankind can truly worship Allah:

> **"I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me."** [*al-Dhāriyāt* 51:56]

This is the only way in which the true meaning of "*la ilāha ill-Allah, Muḥammad rasūl-Allah*" may be implemented in this life.

With this clear understanding of the reality of worship in Islam, the Muslim cannot but be a man with a mission in this life, a mission aimed at establishing the rule of Allah alone, in all aspects of life. His Islam cannot be complete unless he shoulders the responsibility for fulfilling this mission and devotes concerted, sincere efforts to that end. It is this mission that gives the Muslim a true sense of belonging to Islam, and that is the only thing that will make him join the ranks of the believing, striving Muslims and give meaning to his life, as befits his role as a *khalīfah* on this earth, one whom Allah has preferred over most of His creation:

> **"We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of Our Creation . . . "** [*al-Isrā'* 17:70]

No wonder that the sincere Muslim joyfully embraces this mission and eagerly devotes all his resources - his time, his energy and his wealth - to fulfilling it. It is the distinguishing characteristic of his life, for it entitles him to draw closer to Allah. Without it, his life has no meaning, and there is no guarantee of earning the pleasure of Allah except by devoting ongoing efforts to accomplishing this mission. Striving to establish the rule of Allah on earth is the greatest form of worship that the Muslim can undertake, for it brings him closer to Allah and affords him the means of earning His pleasure. So the Muslim continually strives to make this goal a reality. He gives allegiance to no other cause, carries no banner except that of Islam, and adheres only to the principles of this religion.

He reads Qur'ān often

In order to reach such a high level, the Muslim must always place himself in the shade of the Glorious Qur'ān, rejoicing in its refreshing guidance and allowing it to point him in the direction of righteousness. He reads Qur'ān often with an attitude of humility and seeking to understand its meaning. He sets aside regular times for reading, which he never misses: these are times which he devotes solely to reading the words of his Lord. He lets the true meaning of the Qur'ān flow through his soul, cleansing and purifying it, and increasing his wisdom, faith and sense of security:

> **"... For without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction."**
> [*al-Ra'd* 13:28]

The Muslim remembers the beautiful image of the one who reads Qur'ān as portrayed so vividly and eloquently by the Prophet (SAAS), so that he fills his days and nights with recitation of the

Holy Book and rejoices in its blessed meanings. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The likeness of the believer who reads the Qur'ān is like a citron, whose smell is pleasant and whose taste is pleasant; the likeness of a believer who does not read the Qur'ān is like a date, which has no smell, but its taste is sweet; the likeness of the hypocrite who reads the Qur'ān is like a fragrant flower which has a pleasant scent but its taste is bitter; and the likeness of the hypocrite who does not read the Qur'ān is like a colocynth (bitter-apple), which has no smell and its taste is bitter." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Read the Qur'ān, for it will come forward on the Day of Resurrection to intercede for its readers." [Muslim]

And he (SAAS) said:

> "One who reads the Qur'ān fluently is with the honourable pious scribes[1], and one who reads the Qur'ān and struggles to read it even though it is difficult for him, will receive a double reward." [Agreed upon]

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[1] i.e., the angels who record the deeds of man. The meaning is that one who is well-versed in Qur'ān will enjoy such a high status in the Hereafter that he will be in the exalted company of these pious scribes. [Translator]

Can any Muslim then ignore the Qur'ān and fail to read it and reflect upon its meanings?

In conclusion, therefore, the true Muslim's responsibility towards his Lord is to have deep, sincere faith, to do constant good work, and continually to seek His pleasure, to be a true servant to Him, and to fulfil the purpose of his existence as Allah has defined it:

> **"I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me."** [*al-Dhāriyāt* 51:56]

CHAPTER 2

THE MUSLIM AND HIS OWN SELF

Introduction

Islam wants the Muslim to stand out among people, readily distinguished by his appearance, dress, decent behaviour and good deeds, so that he will be a good example and worthy of the great message that he brings to people.

According to a *hadīth* narrated by the great *Sahābī* Ibn al-Hanzaliyyah, the Prophet (SAAS) told his Companions, when they were travelling to meet some brothers in faith:

> "You are going to visit your brothers, so repair your saddles and make sure that you are dressed well, so that you will stand out among people like an adornment, for Allah does not love ugliness."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) considered an unkempt and careless appearance, and scruffy clothes and furnishings, to be forms of ugliness, which is hated and forbidden by Islam.

The true Muslim does not neglect himself, no matter how busy he is with his Islamic responsibilities, because the outward appearance of a man cannot be separated from his inner nature.

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd, al-Hākim in *al-Mustadrak*. Its isnād is *hasan*.

A refined and pleasant appearance befits a noble and decent essence: this is how the Muslim who is to call others to Allah should be.

The smart Muslim is one who strikes a balance between the needs of his body, mind and soul. He gives each the attention it deserves, and does not exaggerate in one aspect to the detriment of the others. In seeking to strike the right balance, he is following the wise guidance of the Prophet (SAAS).

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) knew about exaggeration in worship, because he told him ('Abdullah): "Have I not heard that you fast all day and stay up all night in prayer?" He said, "That is true, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (SAAS) told him: "Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, sleep and get up. For your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you." [Al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

How can the Muslim achieve this balance between his body, mind and soul?

1- HIS BODY

Moderation in food and drink

The Muslim takes good care of his body, actively promoting its good health and strength. So he is moderate in his intake of food and drink, avoiding greed and consuming only what he needs to maintain his well-being and energy. This is in accordance with the guidance of Allah in the Qur'ān:

> **"... Eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters."** [*al-A'rāf* 7:31]

Similarly, the Prophet (SAAS) also advised moderation in food and drink:

> "There is no worse vessel for the son of Adam to fill than his own stomach, but if he must fill it, then let him allow one third for food, one third for drink, and one third for air."[1]

'Umar (RA) said:

> "Beware of filling your stomachs with food and drink, for it is harmful to the body and causes sickness and laziness in performing prayers. Be moderate in both food and drink, for that is healthier for your bodies and furthest removed from extravagance. Allah will hate the fat man (one who revels in a life of luxury), and a man will not be condemned until he favours his desires over his religion."[2]

The Muslim avoids drugs and stimulants, especially those which are clearly known to be *ḥarām*. He sleeps early and wakes early, and does not take medicine except for illness. Besides this, everything in his way of life is aimed at promoting his natural health and energy.

The smart Muslim knows that a strong believer is more loved by Allah than a weak one, as the Prophet (SAAS) said, so he tries to strengthen his body through a healthy lifestyle.

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[1] A *ḥasan ḥadī th*, narrated by Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, et al., and authenticated as *ṣaḥīḥ* by al-Hākim

[2] *al-Kanz*, 8/47.

He exercises regularly

Although the Muslim usually enjoys good physical health, because of his abstention from *ḥarām* or harmful food and drink, and his avoidance of bad habits such as staying up late or indulging in activities that may be detrimental to his well-being, he must still make a concerted effort to improve his bodily strength.

The healthy eating habits that he practices are supplemented by an organized exercise program, appropriate to his physical condition, age and social status. This gives strength, energy and vitality to his body, and provides immunity to illness.

If he is to reap the benefits of exercise, he plans to exercise regularly and does not give up. All of this is done in an organized and systematic fashion, but in moderation, as this is the hallmark of the true Muslim in every place and age.

His body and clothes are clean

The Muslim whom Islam wants to stand out among people is very clean. He has high standards of personal hygiene, bathing frequently in accordance with the guidance of the Prophet (SAAS) who encouraged people to wash themselves completely and wear perfume,[1] especially on Fridays:

> "Have a bath on Fridays and wash your heads, even if you are not in a state of *janābah* (impurity, e.g. following marital relations), and wear perfume." [Al-Bukhārī.]

[1] Wearing perfume in public is for men only; women are not permitted to do so. [Translator]

The Prophet (SAAS) placed such a great emphasis on cleanliness and bathing that some of the four Imāms considered performing *ghusl* before Friday prayer to be obligatory (*wājib*).

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'It is the duty of every Muslim to take a bath (at least) once every seven days, and to wash his head and body.'"
> [Agreed upon]

The true Muslim keeps his clothes and socks clean, checking them from time to time, to be sure that they have no unpleasant smell. He also wears perfume to help keep him clean. It is reported that 'Umar (RA) used to say: "Whoever spends a third of his wealth on perfume is not being extravagant."

The smart Muslim takes care of his mouth, for no one should ever have to smell an unpleasant odour coming from it. He does this by cleaning his teeth every day with a *siwāk*, toothbrush, toothpaste and mouthwashes. He also visits the dentist regularly, to check his mouth, at least once a year, and visits other specialists (such as otolaryngologists or "ear, nose and throat" doctors) as necessary, so that his mouth will stay clean and his breath fresh.

'Ā'ishah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (SAAS) "never woke from sleeping at any time of day or night without cleaning his teeth with a *siwāk* before performing *wuḍū'*."[1]

The Prophet's concern for oral hygiene was so great that he said:

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[1] A *hasan ḥadīth* narrated by Ahmad and Abū Dāwūd.

> "If it were not for the fact that I did not want to overburden my ummah, I would have ordered them to use the *siwāk* before every prayer."
> [Al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

'Ā'ishah (RA) was asked what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do first when he came home. She said: "Use *siwāk*." [Muslim]

Regrettably, some Muslims neglect these teachings that are at the heart of Islam, and do not pay heed to the cleanliness of their mouths, bodies and clothes. So you may see them going to the mosque or to other religious meetings and study circles, annoying their brothers with their unpleasant smell and offending the angels who surround these blessed gatherings. What is really strange is the fact that they themselves listen to and repeat the saying of the Prophet (SAAS) that whoever eats onions, garlic or leeks should not go to the mosque because his breath may disturb the angels and the people:

> "Whoever eats onions, garlic or leeks should not approach our mosque, because whatever offends the sons of Adam may offend the angels."
> [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) banned those who had eaten these pungent vegetables from coming anywhere near the mosque, lest the people and the angels be offended by their bad breath, but these smells pale into insignificance beside the stench of dirty clothes, filthy socks, unwashed bodies and unclean mouths that emanates from some careless and unkempt individuals who offend others in any gathering.

Imām Ahmad and Imām al-Nisa'ī narrate that Jābir (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) came to visit us, and saw a man who was wearing dirty clothes. He said, 'Could this person not find anything with which to wash his clothes?'"

The Prophet (SAAS) did not like a Muslim to appear before people wearing dirty clothes, if he had the means to clean them. He encouraged Muslims always to dress in clean clothes and to present a neat and attractive appearance. He used to say:

> "There is nothing wrong with keeping two garments for Friday, apart from one's workaday clothes."[1]

Islam frequently encourages its followers to be clean always, to perfume their clothes and to ensure that their bodies always smell fresh and clean. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do, according to the report that Imām Muslim quotes from Anas ibn Mālik, who said: "I have never smelt any ambergris or musk that had a better scent than the scent of the Messenger of Allah (SAAS)."

Many reports describe the cleanliness of the Prophet's clothes and body, and describe the sweet smell of his sweat. For example, if he shook hands with a man, his beautiful scent would remain on that man's hand for the rest of the day, and if he laid his hand on the head of a child, that child would stand out from others by virtue of his sweet smell.

Imām al-Bukhārī mentions, in *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, reporting from Jābir, that the Prophet (SAAS) never passed through a place but a

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah. Its *isnād* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

person who followed him would know that he had been there, from his lingering scent.

Once, the Prophet (SAAS) slept in the house of Anas. He sweated, and Umm Anas came to collect the sweat in a bottle. The Prophet (SAAS) asked her about what she was doing, and she told him: "This is your sweat; we add it to our perfume and it is the best of perfumes." [Muslim]

How urgent is the Muslims' need to follow the guidance of this great Messenger in his command to take care of one's hair and keep it neat in accordance with the teachings of Islam. This is reported in the *ḥadīth* that Abū Dāwūd quotes from Abū Hurayrah (RA), who said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Whoever has hair, let him look after it properly.'"

Looking after one's hair, according to Islamic teaching, involves keeping it clean, combing it, perfuming it and styling it nicely.

The Prophet (SAAS) did not like people to leave their hair uncombed and unkempt, so that they looked like wild monsters. He described such an ugly appearance as being like the Shayṭān. In *al-Muwaṭṭā,* Imām Mālik reports a *ḥadīth* with a *mursal isnād* from 'Aṭā' ibn Yassār, who said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) was in the mosque, when a man with unkempt hair and an untidy beard came in. The Prophet (SAAS) pointed to him, as if indicating that to him that he should tidy up his hair and beard. The man went and did so, then returned. The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Is this not better than that any one of you

> should come with unkempt hair, looking like the Shayṭān?"

The Prophet's likening a man with untidy hair to the Shayṭān clearly shows how concerned Islam is with a neat and pleasant appearance, and how opposed it is to scruffiness and ugliness.

The Prophet (SAAS) always took note of people's appearance, and he never saw a scruffily-dressed man with untidy hair but he criticized him for his self-neglect. Imām Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī report that Jābir (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) came to visit us, and he saw an unkempt man whose hair was going in all directions, so he said, 'Could he not find anything with which to calm his head?'"

Good appearance

The true Muslim takes good care of his clothes, so you will see him presenting a pleasant appearance, without being extravagant. He is pleasant to look at and to meet, and does not annoy people with his careless, dishevelled appearance. He always checks himself before he goes out to meet people, and he makes himself look good, in moderation, for the Prophet (SAAS) used to make himself look good in from of his Companions, as well as in front of his family.

In his commentary on the *āyah*,

> **"Say: Who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance? . . ."** [*al-A'rāf* 7:32]

al-Qurtubi said: "Makhūl reported from 'Ā'ishah (RA): 'A group of the Companions of the Prophet (SAAS) was waiting at the door for him, so he prepared to go out to meet them. There was a vessel of water in the house, and he peered into it, smoothing his beard and his hair. ('Ā'ishah said:) I asked him, "O Messenger of Allah, even you do this?" He said, "Yes, when a man goes out to meet his brothers, let him prepare himself properly, for Allah is beautiful and loves beauty."'"

The Muslim does all of this in accordance with the Islamic ideal of moderation, avoiding the extremes of either exaggeration or negligence:

> **"Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those (extremes)."**
> [*al-Furqān* 25:67]

Islam wants its followers, and especially its advocates (*dā'īs*) to stand out in gatherings in an attractive fashion, not to appear unsightly or unbearable. Neglecting one's appearance to the extent of being offensive to one's companions in the name of asceticism and humility is not part of Islam. The Prophet (SAAS), who was the epitome of asceticism and humility, used to dress in decent clothes and present a pleasant appearance to his family and his companions. He regarded dressing well and looking good as a demonstration of the blessings of Allah:

> "Allah loves to see the signs of His gifts on His servant."[1]

Ibn Sa'd reports in *al-Tabaqāt* that Jundab ibn Makīth (RA) said:

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[1] A *Hasan hadīth* narrated by al-Tirmidhī and al-Hakīm.

> "Whenever a delegation came to meet the Messenger of Allah (SAAS), he would wear his best clothes and order his leading Companions to do likewise. I saw the Prophet (SAAS) on the day that the delegation of Kindah came to meet him; he was wearing a Yemeni garment, and Abū Bakr and 'Umar were dressed similarly."

Ibn al-Mubārak, al-Ṭabarānī, al-Ḥākim, al-Bayhaqī and others report that 'Umar (RA) said:

> "I saw the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) ask for a new garment. He put it on, and when it reached his knees he said, 'Praise be to Allah, Who has given me clothes with which to cover myself and make myself look beautiful in this life.'"

'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf (RA) used to dress in a cloak or garment that was worth four or five hundred [*Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/131], and Ibn 'Abbās bought a garment worth one thousand *dirhams* and wore it [*Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/131].

So long as this taking care of one's outward appearance does not go to extremes, then it is part of the beauty that Allah has allowed for His servants and encouraged them to adopt:

> **"O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters.**
> **Say, who has forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He had produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the**

life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgement. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who understand." [*al-A'rāf 7:31-32*]

Muslim reports from Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No one who has even an atom's-weight of pride in his heart will enter Paradise." A man asked him, "What if he likes his clothes and shoes to look good?" (Meaning, is this counted as pride?) The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty. Pride means denying the truth and looking down on other people."

This is the understanding adopted by the *Ṣaḥābah* and those who followed them sincerely. Therefore Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (RA) always took care to dress well and to ensure that he smelled clean and fresh, and urged others to do likewise. One day he met a man who used to attend his circle, who was dressed in scruffy clothes. He took him to one side and offered him one thousand *dirhams* with which to smarten himself up. The man told him, "I have money, I do not need this." Abū Ḥanīfah admonished him: "Have you not heard the *ḥadīth*, 'Allah loves to see the signs of His gifts on His servant'? So you have to change yourself, and not appear offensive to your friend."

Naturally, those who call people to Allah should be better and smarter in appearance than others, so that they will be better able to attract people and make their message reach their hearts. Indeed they, unlike others, are required to be like this even if they do not go out and meet people, because those who proclaim the word of Allah should take care of their appearance and pay

attention to the cleanliness of their bodies, clothes, nails and hair. They should do this even if they are in a state of isolation or retreat, in response to the call of the natural inclination of man (*fiṭrah*) which the Prophet (SAAS) told us about and outlined its requirements:

> "Five things are part of the *fiṭrah*: circumcision, removing the pubic hair, plucking hair from the armpits, cutting the nails, and trimming the moustache." [al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Taking care of oneself in accordance with this *fiṭrah* is something encouraged by Islam and supported by every person of common sense and good taste.

Nevertheless, paying attention to one's appearance should not make a Muslim fall into the trap of over-exaggerating his grooming to the extent that he loses sight of the sense of balance prescribed by Islamic teaching. The Muslim always aims at moderation in all things, and is on the alert to prevent any one aspect of his life from taking over at the expense of another.

The Muslim never forgets that Islam, which encourages him to take care of his appearance and to wear his beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer, is also the religion that warns him against going to extremes in that, and tells him to avoid becoming enslaved by his appearance, as the *ḥadīth* says:

> "Wretched is the slave of the *dīnār*, *dirham*, and fancy clothes of velvet and silk! If he is given, he is pleased, and if he is not given, he is displeased."[al-Bukhārī.]

No doubt those who call people to Allah are saved from this error, because they surround themselves with the protection of Islam and adopt the principles of moderation that it has brought.

2 HIS MIND

Knowledge is an obligation and an honour for the Muslim

The Muslim believes that exercising his mind and seeking knowledge and discovering the signs of Allah in the universe is an obligation, because of the saying of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim."
> [al-Bukhārī.]

Therefore the Muslim must continue to pursue knowledge, as long as the breath of life remains in his body. The fact that Allah has raised the status of those who have knowledge, and described them alone as truly fearing Him, should be enough to encourage the Muslim to apply himself to seeking knowledge. For He said:

> **". . . Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge . . . "**
> [*Fāṭir* 35:28]

No one truly fears Allah except those whose minds are enlightened enough to see the greatness and power of Allah manifested in the creation of the universe and all living things, and these are the people of knowledge. So He has preferred them over those who have no knowledge:

> **". . . Say: 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are**

endued with understanding that receive admonition.'" [*al-Zumar* 39:9]

Ṣafwān ibn 'Assāl al-Murādī came to the Prophet (SAAS) in the mosque and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have come seeking knowledge." The Prophet (SAAS) told him: "Welcome, O seeker of knowledge! Truly the angels surround the seeker of knowledge with their wings, gathering around him in ranks one above the other, until they reach the first heaven, out of love for that which he seeks."[1]

The texts that extol the virtue of knowledge and exhort its pursuit are many, therefore the true Muslim is either a scholar or a seeker of knowledge, and cannot be anything else.

Continually seeking knowledge until death

True knowledge does not mean obtaining a degree or diploma that will let one earn an income and guarantee a good standard of living, after which one turns away from learning and does not explore the treasure of knowledge any further; true learning means that one continues to read and study, increasing one's learning day by day, in accordance with the words of the Qur'an:

". . . But say, 'O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge.'" [*Ṭā-Hā* 20:114]

Our righteous predecessors never stopped seeking to increase their knowledge, no matter how high a level of learning they had achieved, and they would continue their pursuit until the end of their lives. They believed that knowledge was a living thing that

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[1]Reported by Ahmad, al-Tabarānī, Ibn Hibbān, al-Hākim with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

would thrive if it were actively pursued, but would wither and perish if it were ignored and abandoned. Many sayings are attributed to them that eloquently express their respect for learning and their keenness to acquire knowledge. Examples of their sayings are given below.

Imām Ibn 'Abd al-Barr reported that Ibn Abī Ghassān said: "So long as you are seeking knowledge you are knowledgeable, but as soon as you abandon this pursuit you become ignorant."

Imām Mālik (RA) said: "No one who has knowledge should stop seeking knowledge."

Imām 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubārak was asked: "How long will you seek knowledge?" He said, "Until I die, for probably I have not yet learnt the things that will benefit me most."

Imām Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā' was asked: "For how long does it befit a man to seek knowledge?" He said, "For as long as he has life in him."

Imām Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah gave an excellent answer when he was asked "Who is most in need of seeking knowledge?" He said: "Those who have the most knowledge." He was asked, "Why?" and he replied, "Because if they make a mistake, it is worse."

Such was Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH), the great *mufassir* (Qur'ānic exegete) and prominent scholar in philosophy (*'ilm al-kalām*) and other disciplines, who authored many works. Allah gave him such fame in knowledge that people would come from all over to see him whenever he visited a city. When he came to the city of Merv (in Turkmenistan), flocks of scholars and students came to have the privilege of listening to and learning from him. Among the seekers of knowledge who attended his

circle was a young man, less than twenty years old, who was very well versed in literature and genealogy. When Imām Fakhr al-Dīn realized that this student was expert in genealogy, a field in which he knew very little, he asked his student to teach him. He did not find it unacceptable to become the student of his student, and he even made him sit in the teacher's place while he himself sat at his feet. Such an act was characteristic of Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, and it did not detract from his high status, as he was the Imām of his age.

This remarkable story was told by the literary historian Yāqūt al-Hamwī in his book *Mu'jam al-udabā'* (Dictionary of literary authors), where he gives a biography of 'Azīz al-Dīn Ismā'īl ibn al-Ḥasan al-Marwazī al-Nassābah al-Ḥusayni, whom Yāqūt met and spent much time with, so was able to write a comprehensive biography of him. In this biography he says:

> "'Azīz al-Dīn told me: 'Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī went to Merv. He had such a great reputation and was held in such awe that nobody dared to argue with him; they would barely breathe in his presence. I went to meet him, and I often went to study with him. One day he said to me: "I would like you to write me a book giving the genealogy of *al-Ṭālibiyyīn* (the descendants of Abū Ṭālib) so that I may study it, for I do not want to remain ignorant of it." I asked him: "Do you want it presented as a family tree, or written down as a narrative?" He said, "A family tree cannot be learnt by heart. I want something that I can memorize." So I went away and wrote the book, which I called *al-Fakhrī.* When I brought it to him, he took it, then got up from his mattress, sat on the mat, and told me to sit in the place he had

> just vacated. I thought this was too much, and told him: "I am your servant." I reprimanded me severely, saying, "Sit where I tell you!" Allah knows, I felt that I had no choice but to sit where he told me. Then he began to read the book to me, while he was sitting at my feet, asking me about anything he did not understand, until he finished the book. When he had finished, he said, "Now sit wherever you wish, for in this field of knowledge you are my teacher and I am your student, and it is not right for the student to sit anywhere but at the feet of his teacher. So I got up, and he sat in his rightful place, and I began to read to him, sitting where he had sat previously.'"

After quoting this incident, Yāqūt said, "Indeed this is good manners, especially for a man who enjoys such a high status."

How great was the love and respect these scholars gave to knowledge! How highly they regarded it, and how great is the need for the later generation to learn from the attitude of their forebears!

What Muslims need to know

The first thing that the Muslim needs to know is how to read the Qur'ān properly (with *tajwīd*) and to understand its meaning. Then he should learn something of the sciences of *hadīth*, the *sīrah* of the Prophet (SAAS), and the history of the *Sahābah* and *Tābi'īn*, who are prominent figures in Islam. He should acquire as much knowledge of *fiqh* as he needs to ensure that his worship and daily dealings are correct, and he should ensure that he has a sound grasp of the basic principles of his religion. This is the duty of the Muslim who is not a specialist in the sciences of *sharī'ah*.

If he is a specialist in a branch of *sharī'ah*, then he does what every true Muslim should do, which is to do his best to learn his specialty thoroughly and be successful in it. It goes without saying that every Muslim also needs to learn Arabic properly.

He should be proficient in his specialty

Besides this, the Muslim turns to his own specialty and gives it all of his energy and pays a great deal of attention to it. He approaches it like a Muslim who believes that it is a religious obligation to work in his field of specialization, whether it is in *sharī'ah* or in another area of religious knowledge, or in another field such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, engineering, astronomy, medicine, industry, commerce, etc. Therefore he should become proficient in whatever field he has specialized in, and should spare no effort to read whatever has been written about it, both in his own language and in others if he is able to. He should keep abreast of developments in his field through continual reading and study of all its aspects. This is because, in these times, the smart Muslim is the one who achieves great academic success, which will raise his status in the eyes of other people. This in turn will enhance his *da'wah*, so long as he presents it sincerely and earnestly, and in accordance with the spirit of Islam and its teachings about knowledge.

Islam has made knowledge a duty, whereby the one who seeks it draws closer to Allah and adopts it as a means of earning His pleasure. So we see that the scholars of the early generation used to emphasize these sublime principles in their introductions to their books, because through the knowledge that they spent their lives spreading, they were seeking to earn the pleasure of Allah, and they presented the results of their study purely for His sake.

He exposes himself to information about other fields

The smart Muslim does not restrict himself to his own field, but is open to learning about other areas too. So he reads books and academic, literary and cultural journals about various useful branches of knowledge, especially those that are related to his own field. In this way, he gains a little knowledge about many things, which enriches his mind and broadens his horizons.

He is proficient in a foreign language

He does not forget to pay attention to foreign languages, because these days, learning a foreign language is one of the most important tasks required of the active Muslim who understands the demands of contemporary Islamic life.

His religion gives the attentive Muslim a great incentive to learn foreign languages. Fifteen centuries ago, the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged the study of foreign languages so that the Muslims would always be able to communicate with various nations and races, and convey to them the message of truth that Allah has entrusted to them to proclaim throughout the world. We see evidence of this in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Zayd ibn Thābit (RA), in which he says that the Prophet (SAAS) told him:

> "'O Zayd, learn the writing of the Jews, for by Allah I do not trust the Jews to write anything down for me.' (Zayd) said: So I learnt it, and it only took me a month to become proficient in it. Then I used to take down whatever letters the Prophet (SAAS) wanted to send to them, and I would read for him the letters that they sent him."

> In another report he said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) asked me, 'Do you know Syriac? I have received a letter in this language.' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Then learn it.' So I learnt it."[1]

Similarly, Ibn al-Zubayr (RA) was proficient in a number of languages, but learning them did not distract him from his religion or preparing for the Hereafter. He had a hundred (male) slaves, each of whom spoke a different language, and he used to speak to each slave in his own language. If you were to see this man when he was dealing with worldly affairs, you would think that he was a man who did not give a second's thought to the Hereafter, and if you saw him dealing with religious matters, you would think that he was a man who did not give a second's thought to this world.[2]

Nowadays, more than ever before, the Muslim needs to be proficient in foreign languages so that he may know what is going on around him, both positive and negative, and so that he may understand what has been written about his *ummah* and its heritage in languages other than his own, and thus be able to defend his *ummah* from evil and speak up for its well-being.

3 HIS SOUL

While he is taking care of his physical and mental needs, the true Muslim does not forget that he is not comprised only of a body and mind, but he also has a passionate, yearning soul whose higher longings motivate him to lift himself up by devoting himself to

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

[2]Reported by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak* 3/549, and Ibn Na'īm in *al-Ḥilyah*, 1/334.

worship, seeking the blessings of Allah and fearing His punishment.

He polishes his soul through worship

The Muslim is obliged to take care of his soul, so he starts to polish it and refine it through constant worship and awareness of Allah, night and day. He is alert to the devious tricks and deceptive whispers of the Shayṭān and if, in some moment of human weakness, evil thoughts come to him from that source, he remembers Allah and finds his way back to the Straight Path:

> **"Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, bring Allah to remembrance, when lo! They see aright."**
> [*al-A'rāf* 7:201]

Therefore, the Prophet (SAAS) used to tell his Companions: "Renew your faith." He was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how do we renew our faith?" He said, "By frequently repeating *la ilāha ill-Allah.*"[1]

The Muslim seeks to strengthen his soul through various kinds of worship which he performs out of obedience to and fear of Allah, such as reading Qur'ān carefully and with understanding, and remembering Allah with humility, and praying correctly and with presence of mind, and other kinds of worship and spiritual exercises, training himself to adhere to different acts of worship until they become second nature and he cannot do without them. Thus he develops and enhances his feelings until, in most cases, he becomes alert and aware, conscious that Allah is watching him

[1]Reported by Ahmad with a *jayyid isnād*.

in public and in private, so that he never mistreats the people he deals with and never deviates from the true path.

He keeps company with righteous people and joins religious gatherings

The Muslim seeks to attain this high status by keeping company with righteous people who will teach one another, and him, about Truth (*haqq*) and patience and constancy (*sabr*), and by frequently attending religious gatherings where Allah's name is mentioned often, where there is discussion of the greatness of Islamic teaching regarding the *tarbiyah* (education, development) of the individual, the family and the community and where those present ponder the might of Allah, the Subduer, the Omnipotent, from which nothing in heaven or earth can detract, and meditate on the wonder of His creation of the universe and of man. In such gatherings, souls are purified, hearts are cleansed, and a person's whole being is filled with faith.

So 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah (RA), whenever he met one of the Companions of the Prophet (SAAS), used to say, "Come, let us believe in our Lord for a while." When the Prophet (SAAS) heard about it, he said, "May Allah have mercy on Ibn Rawāḥah, for he loves the gatherings that the angels feel proud to attend."[1]

The rightly-guided *khalīfah* 'Umar al-Fārūq (RA) used to make the effort to take a regular break from his many duties and the burden of his position as ruler. He would take the hand of one or two men and say, "Come on, let us go and increase our faith," then they would remember Allah.[2]

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]*Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/329

Even 'Umar (RA), who was so righteous and performed so many acts of worship, felt the need to purify his soul from time to time. He would remove himself for a while from the cares and worries of life, to refresh his soul and cleanse his heart. Likewise, Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (RA) would often say to his companions, when they were walking, "Let us sit down and believe for a while."[1]

The Muslim is responsible for strengthening his soul and purifying his heart. He must always push himself to attain a higher level, and guard against slipping down:

> **"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right - truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!"** [*al-Shams* 91: 7-10]

So the Muslim is required to choose his friends carefully and to join only those gatherings that will increase his faith, *taqwā* and insight. He should avoid the bad company of the devils among mankind, and keep away from gatherings of sin and disobedience which will only corrupt his soul:

> **"And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds."** [*al-Kahf* 18:28]

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[1] *Ibid.*

He frequently repeats *du'ā 's* and supplications described in *aḥā dīth*

Another way in which the Muslim may strengthen his soul and connect his heart to Allah is by repeating the supplications which it is reported that the Prophet (SAAS) used to say on various occasions.

So there is a *du'ā'* which he would say when he left his house, and others for entering the home, saying farewell to a traveller, welcoming a traveller home, wearing new clothes, lying down in bed, waking up from sleep, etc. There is hardly anything that the Prophet (SAAS) did that he did not have a *du'ā'* for, through which he asked Allah to guide him, protect him from error, to take care of him and to decree good for him, as is explained in the books of *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth* narrated from the Prophet (SAAS). See, for example, *al-Adhkār* by al-Nawawī and *al-Ma'thūrā t* by Hasan al-Bannā'.[1] He used to teach these *du'ā*s and *adhkār* to his Companions, and encouraged them to repeat them at the appropriate times.

The smart Muslim is keen to learn these *du'ā*s and *adhkār*, following the example of the Prophet (SAAS) and his distinguished Companions, and he keeps repeating them at the appropriate times, as much as he is able. In this way his heart will remain in contact with Allah, and his soul will be cleansed and purified. Through these spiritual exercises the Prophet (SAAS) trained the souls of the first generation of the *Ṣaḥābah*, so that they became pure and unsullied. Islam wrought a great miracle in

[1]English-speaking Muslims who wish to learn *du'ās* may consult *Selected Prayers* by Jamal Badawi, which is based largely on Hasan al-Banna's *al-Ma'thūrāt*, and includes transliterations and translations of many *du'ās*. [Translator]

forming a refined, superior generation that was unique in the history of mankind, one which made such wondrous achievements in a few short years.

The true Muslim, today more than ever, needs to train his soul to soar to that high level and to live up to the heavy responsibilities of his *da'wah*.

CHAPTER 3

THE MUSLIM AND HIS PARENTS

Treating them with kindness and respect (*birr*)

One of the main distinguishing characteristics of the true Muslim is his respectful and kind treatment of his parents, because to treat parents with kindness and respect is one of the greatest commandments of Islam, as is clearly confirmed in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The Muslim who is truly following this commandment, which is a constant theme in the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet, must be characterized by his kind and respectful attitude towards his parents.

He recognizes their status and knows his duties towards them

Islam has raised the status of the parents to a level that is unknown in any other religion, in that it has placed kindness and respect towards them on a level that is just one degree below belief in Allah and true worship of Him.

Allah revealed many *āyāt* which reinforce the message that pleasing one's parents comes second only to pleasing Him, and respecting them is counted as a human virtue that is just one step below belief in in Him:

> **"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents . . ."** [*al-Nisā'* 4:36]

So the true Muslim is kinder and more respectful towards his parents than any other person in the world.

The Qur'ān paints a vivid picture of the high status of the parents, and explains the excellent way in which the Muslim should treat them, if one or both of them should live to old age and reach the stage of senility and incapability, to a degree that was unknown before the light of this religion dawned upon the face of the earth.

> **"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.**
> **And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."** [*al-Isrā'* 17:23-24]

This is a divine commandment to the Muslim, which is presented in the form of an ultimate and inescapable decree: **"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents."** These words represent the strong connection between worshipping Allah and treating parents with kindness and respect, thus raising the status of parents to a level that wise men, reformers and philosophers have never managed to ascribe to them.

This *āyah* does not stop at drawing this vivid picture of respect towards one's parents, but it goes on to mobilize the forces of

mercy, compassion and kindness in the hearts of children in a gentle way that is filled with humanity: **"Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life."** When they reach the age of senility and infirmity, they are under your care, and you must be careful to avoid uttering any word of complaint or anger towards them: **"Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them."** You must take the time to choose the right words to say to them, words that will make them feel loved and wanted: **"but address them in terms of honour."** Your attitude towards them should be one of respect, humility and obedience: **"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility."** And pray for them for the unforgettable favours they have done for you, as they took care of you when you were small and weak: **"And say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."**

The open hearted Muslim finds frequent references in the Qur'ān which increase his respect for his parents and encourage him to treat them kindly:

> **"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents . . ."**
> [*al-Nisā'* 4:36]
>
> **"We have enjoined on man kindness to parents . . ."** [*al- 'Ankabūt* 29:8]
>
> **"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him . . ."** [*Luqmān* 31:14]

Anyone who looks into the Islamic sources regarding the kind treatment of parents will also find plenty of *aḥādīth* that reinforce the message of the *āyāt* quoted above and reiterate the virtue of

kindness and respect towards one's parents, as well as warning against disobedience or mistreatment of them for any reason whatsoever.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA) said:

> "I asked the Prophet (SAAS), 'Which deed is most liked by Allah?' He said, 'Prayer offered on time.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, 'Kindness and respect towards parents.' I asked him, 'Then what?' He said, '*Jihād* for the sake of Allah.'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS), who was a great educator, placed kindness and respect towards parents between two of the greatest deeds in Islam: prayer offered on time and *jihād* for the sake of Allah. Prayer is the pillar or foundation of the faith, and *jihād* is the pinnacle of Islam. What a high status the Prophet (SAAS) has given to parents!

A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) to "make *bay'ah*" and to pledge to undertake *hijrah* and *jihād* in the hope of receiving reward from Allah. The Prophet (SAAS) did not rush to accept his *bay'ah*, but asked him: "Are either of your parents alive?" The man said, "Yes, both of them." The Prophet (SAAS) asked, "And do you wish to receive reward from Allah?" The man replied. 'Yes." So the kindhearted and compassionate Prophet (SAAS) told him: "Go back to your parents and keep them company in the best possible way." [Agreed upon]

According to a report narrated by both al-Bukhari and Muslim, a man came and asked the Prophet (SAAS) for permission to participate in *jihād*. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He

said, "Yes," so the Prophet (SAAS) told him: "So perform *jihād* by taking care of them."

In the midst of preparing his army for *jihād*, the Prophet (SAAS) did not forget the weakness of parents and their claims on their children, so he gently discouraged this volunteer and reminded him to take care of his parents, despite the fact that at that time he needed all the manpower he could get for the forthcoming *jihād*. This is because he understood the importance of respect and kind treatment of parents, and knew its position in the overall Islamic framework that Allah has designed for the well-being and happiness of mankind.

When the mother of Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ objected to her son's embracing Islam, she told him: "Give up Islam, or else I will go on hunger strike until I die. Then you will feel shame before the Arabs, as they will say, 'He killed his mother.'" Sa'd told her: "You should know that, by Allah, even if you had a hundred souls, and they left your body one by one, I would never give up Islam." Then Allah revealed an *āyah* which the Prophet (SAAS) recited to the Muslims, in which Sa'd was rebuked for the harshness of his reply to his mother:

> **"But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration) . . ."** [*Luqmān* 31:15]

The story of the devoted worshipper Jurayj, which was told by the Prophet (SAAS), is a vivid illustration of the importance of respecting one's parents and being quick to obey them. One day his mother called him whilst he was praying, and he wondered, "My Lord, my mother or my prayer?" He chose to continue his

prayer (rather than answer his mother). She called him a second time, but he continued praying and did not answer her. Then she called him a third time, and when he did not respond she prayed to Allah not to let him die until he had seen the face of a prostitute.

There was a prostitute in that locality who had committed adultery with a shepherd and had become pregnant. When she realized that she was with child, the shepherd told her: "If you are asked about the father of the baby, say that it is Jurayj, the devoted worshipper." This is what she said, so the people went and destroyed the place where he used to pray. The ruler brought him to the public square, and on the way Jurayj remembered his mother's prayer and smiled. When he was brought forth to be punished, he asked for permission to pray two *rak'ahs*, then he asked for the infant to be brought forth and whispered in his ear, "Who is your father?" The infant said, "My father is so-and-so, the shepherd."[1] The people exclaimed "*Lā ilāha ill-Allah*!" and "*Allahu akbar*!" They told Jurayj, "We will rebuild your prayer-place with silver and gold!" He said, "No, just rebuild it as it was, with bricks and mortar."

Concerning this story, which is reported by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet (SAAS) said: "If Jurayj had had sound knowledge, he would have known that answering his mother was more important than continuing his prayer." Hence the *fuqahā'* suggested that if a man is praying a *nāfil* prayer and one of his parents calls him, he is obliged to stop his prayer and answer them.

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[1]This child is one of the three who spoke in the cradle. The other two are 'Īsā ibn Maryam (Jesus the son of Mary) and the child who was with his mother among the people of *al-Ukhdūd* (the ditch). [Author]

He is kind and respectful towards them even if they are not Muslim

The Prophet (SAAS) raised his teachings to a new peak when he advised his followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect even if they followed a religion other than Islam. This is clear from the *hadīth* of Asmā' bint Abī Bakr al-Siddīq (RA), who said: "My mother came to me, and she was a *mushrik* at the time of the Prophet (SAAS). I asked the Prophet (SAAS): 'My mother has come to me and needs my help, so should I help her?' He said, 'Yes, keep in touch with your mother and help her.'" [Agreed upon]

The true Muslim who understands the meaning of this Qur'ānic guidance and the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) cannot but be the best and kindest of all people towards his parents, at all times. This is the practice of the *Sahābah* and those who followed them sincerely. A man asked Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab (RA): "I understood all of the *āyah* about kindness and respect towards parents, apart from the phrase **'but address them in terms of honour.'** How can I address them in terms of honour?" Sa'īd replied: "It means that you should address them as a servant addresses his master." Ibn Sīrīn (RA) used to speak to his mother in a soft voice, like that of a sick person, out of respect for her.

He is extremely reluctant to disobey them

If we turn from the commandments to treat parents with kindness and respect, and look at what Islam says to discourage disobedience towards one's parents, we find teachings that are aimed at making the disobedient child realize the error of his ways. Disobedience towards one's parents is likened to *shirk*, just as treating them with kindness and respect is connected to belief in Allah. Disobedience towards one's parents is a heinous crime

that the true Muslim fears to commit, because it will diminish his reward and is, in fact, viewed as one of the worst sins.

Abu Bakrah Nufay' ibn al-Hārith said:

> "The Messenger of Allah asked us three times, 'Shall I tell you the greatest sins?' We said, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Associating partners with Allah and disobeying one's parents.'" [Agreed upon]

His mother comes first, then his father

In order to avoid any imbalance, such as the child treating one parent well at the expense of the other, the Islamic teachings concerning one's relationship with one's parents deal with the mother and the father individually. So, as we have seen, when the man came to give *bay'ah* and pledge to take part in *jihād*, the Prophet (SAAS) asked him, "Are either of your parents alive?" This indicates that the Muslim is obliged to treat both parents equally well. Similarly, Asmā' was ordered to keep in contact with and help her *mushrik* mother.

A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and asked him: "O Messenger of Allah, who among people is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (SAAS) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (SAAS) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" He said, "Then your father." [Agreed upon]

This *ḥadīth* confirms that the Prophet (SAAS) gave precedence to kind treatment of one's mother over kind treatment of one's father, and the *Ṣaḥābah* used to remind the Muslims of this after

the death of the Prophet (SAAS). Ibn 'Abbās (RA), a great scholar of this *ummah*, considered kind treatment of the mother to be the best deed to bring one closer to Allah. A man came to him and said: "I asked for a woman's hand in marriage, and she refused me; someone else asked for her hand, and she accepted and married him. I felt jealous, and killed her. Will my repentance be accepted?" Ibn 'Abbās asked, "Is your mother still alive?" He said, "No." So he told him: "Repent to Allah and do your best to draw close to Him." 'Atā' ibn Yassār, who narrated this report from Ibn 'Abbās, said: "I went and asked Ibn 'Abbās, 'Why did you ask him if his mother was still alive?' He said, 'Because I know of no other deed that brings people closer to Allah than kind treatment and respect towards one's mother.'"[1]

Imam al-Bukhārī opens his book *al-Adab al-Mufrad* with a chapter on respect and kindness towards parents (*birr al-wālidayn*), in which he places the section on good treatment of the mother before the section on good treatment of the father, consistent with the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS).

The Qur'ān evokes feelings of love and respect in the heart of the child, and encourages him to treat his parents well. It refers to the mother being given precedence because of pregnancy and breastfeeding, and the pains and trials that she suffers during these two stages, in a most gentle and compassionate way. It recognizes her noble sacrifice and great tenderness and care:

> **"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command): 'Show gratitude**

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

to Me and to your parents: to Me is (your final) Goal.'" [*Luqmān* 31:14]

What supreme teaching! What humane, compassionate direction: **"Show gratitude to Me and to your parents."** Showing gratitude to parents for what they have done for their child comes second only to showing gratitude to Allah, and is one of the best righteous deeds. What a high status this religion gives to parents!

Then the child makes his way in the world and becomes rich, and his wife and children distract him from caring for his parents. He forgets how much his father spent on him, so he fails to spend on his father, thus earning the anger of Allah. But the true Muslim is safe from this, because he is constantly aware of the wise teachings of Islam, and responds to the words of the Prophet (SAAS): "You and your wealth are for your father."[1]

The true Muslim is struck by these teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) and his heart is filled with love, respect and kindness towards his parents. Thus he is protected from falling into the sin

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[1]Reported by Imam Aḥmad, Abu Dāwud and Ibn Mājah with a *ḥasan isnād*. The full text of the *hadīth* is: "A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I have wealth and children, and my father wants to take all of my wealth.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'You and your wealth are for your father. Your children are among your best earnings, so take from what your children earn.'" In another report he (SAAS) said: "Take it and enjoy it."
Imām al-Khaṭṭābī commented: "'He wants to take all my wealth' means that he wanted to take it all and leave nothing. It appears that the reason why the man asked this question was that he was having to spend on his father, and the amount required would consume all of his wealth, not just what he had to spare. The Prophet (SAAS) did not give him permission to stop spending on his father, but told him, 'You and your wealth are for your father,' which means that if your father needed all of your wealth, he will take as much as he needs, as if he were taking from his own wealth. If you do not have any accumulated wealth, but you have an income, you should earn money and spend it on him."

of disobedience, and he will truly be as the Prophet of Islam wanted him to be: he and his wealth will be for his father.

He treats his parents' friends well.

Islam did not stop at teaching its followers to treat their parents with kindness and respect, but it also enjoins them to show respect to those whom their parents love.

Ibn 'Umar (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend." In another report: "One of the best kinds of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with his father's friend even after his father has passed away." [Muslim]

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (RA) met a friend of his father 'Umar (RA), and went out of his way to treat him well and show him respect. Some of those who were with him said, "Is it not enough that you gave him two *dirhams* in charity?" Ibn 'Umar said, "The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Keep in touch with your father's friend and do not break your tie with him, or else Allah will extinguish your light.'" [Muslim]

A man asked the Prophet (SAAS): "O Messenger of Allah, is there any act of kindness or respect that I can do for my parents after they have died?" He said: "Yes, there are four things: praying and asking forgiveness for them; fulfilling their promises;

respecting their friends; and keeping in contact with your relatives, for you have no relatives except through them."[1]

The highest form of love, faithfulness and respect that a child can show to his parents is to keep in touch with their friends, both during their lifetime and after their death. The true Muslim always seeks to strengthen the ties of friendship with those whom his parents love. He continues to care about his parents even after they have died, so he never forgets those old friendships and he maintains his ties with the circles of friends forged by his parents. Noble human feelings such as these, and sincere friendships, add beauty and enjoyment to life, and all of this depends on the presence of true Muslims in this world.

In the West, the child leaves his parents when he reaches the age of majority and breaks the ties of kinship, never meeting his parents or showing any compassion or feelings towards his father or mother. The child goes his own way, scarcely looking back with love or respect to those who sacrificed so much and are now facing the worst time of their life, after they gave the best days of their lives for their children who were just starting out on life.

What comparison can there be between the ungrateful, disobedient attitude of the child in the West towards his parents , and the respect, kindness, affection and love shown by the dutiful Muslim to his parents during their lifetime and after their death, and keeping in touch with their friends? Surely no other system or way of life has ever equalled the unique way in which Islam moulds people and instils humanity in them.

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

How does he show kindness and respect towards them?

The Muslim who has been moulded by Islam is truly a man who is kind towards his parents. He shows them the utmost respect, stands up for them when they enter the room where he is sitting, kisses their hands, lowers his voice out of politeness when he speaks to them, is humble towards them, speaks to them in gentle tones, never lets harsh or hurtful words cross his tongue, and never treats them in a disrespectful manner, no matter what the circumstances. In all of this, he is following the command of Allah:

> **"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.**
> **And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."** [*al-Isrā'* 17:23-24]

If parents are deviating from true Islam in some way, the dutiful Muslim son should, in this case, approach them in a gentle and sensitive manner, so as to dissuade them from their error. He should not condemn them harshly, but should try to convince them with solid proof, sound logic and wise words, until they turn to the truth in which he believes.

The wise Muslim does not forget that he is required to treat his parents well even if they are *mushrikīn*. While he is aware that *shirk* is the greatest of sins, he still fulfils his own responsibility, following the command of Allah:

"And we have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), 'Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is (your final) Goal.

But if they strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love): in the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that you did."
[*Luqmān* 31:14-15]

Parents are the closest and most beloved of kin, but the bond with them, although it is regarded very highly, still comes second to *'aqīdah* (correct belief). If the parents are *mushrikīn* and tell their child to join them in their *shirk*, he must not obey them in that, for the Muslim must not obey a fellow-creature in disobeying the Creator. The demands of faith take precedence over all human relationships. However, the child is still obliged to treat his parents with kindness and respect, and to take care of them.

Hence the true Muslim treats his parents with kindness and respect in all circumstances, doing whatever he can to make them happy, within the limits laid down by Allah. He spares no effort to show honour and respect towards them, providing the best food, clothing and housing that he can afford, appropriate both to their social status and environment, and to Islamic standards. Above all, he should speak kindly to them, present a pleasant and smiling face, and show love, tenderness, faithfulness and gratitude towards those who are most deserving of this good treatment: his parents.

The respect and duty of the true Muslim towards his parents extends even beyond their death: he should give money in charity on their behalf and pray often for them, as Allah says:

> **"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: 'My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."** [*al-Isrā'* 17:24]

This, then, is the nature of Islamic teaching concerning the respect and kindness to be shown towards parents, and the nature of the dutiful Muslim who is guided by it. But are Muslims today following this teaching after being overtaken by materialism and blinded by the glare of modern civilization? Nowadays our main concern is focused on wives and children, not on our parents. Caring for our parents comes after our concern for our wives and children, and parents may not even have that, unless their children happen to be among those who have that sense of duty and deep *taqwā*.

The modern Western social structures that have taken over the minds of many Muslims, do not include kindness and respect towards parents, caring for them in their old age and protecting them from neglect in their later years. This makes the man who is convinced of Western ideas think only of his wife and children, and he hardly ever takes the time to look back with love and kindness in gratitude to the generation that came before, those who stayed up so many nights to care for him and who spent so much on his upbringing and preparing him for life. When he thinks of a comfortable home, fine clothes, good food and travel, he thinks in terms of providing them for his wife and children; he barely gives a thought to the share his parents should have in these luxuries, when they are most in need of receiving them from the hand of their beloved son.

Treating parents with kindness and respect, giving generously to them, speaking to them gently and politely, and smiling at them... This is the esential attitude of the Muslim. Muslims should never abandon this attitude, no matter how complicated life gets, or how it develops, or how many imported habits they accumulate. This attitude is one which will protect them from hard-heartedness and selfish behaviour, and will return them to their original character, humanity and faithfulness, so that they avoid sinking to the depths of selfishness and ingratitude as others have done. And, above all, this attitude will open the doors of Paradise to them.

CHAPTER 4

THE MUSLIM AND HIS WIFE

Islamic view of marriage and woman

Marriage in Islam offers tranquillity to the soul and peace of mind, so that man and woman may live together in an atmosphere of love, mercy, harmony, co-operation, mutual advice and tolerance, and lay the foundation for raising a Muslim family in a nurturing, sound environment.

The Holy Qur'ān has described, in the most moving and eloquent terms, this eternal, natural relationship between man and woman, which is filled with tranquility, security, love, understanding and compassion:

> **"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect."** [*al-Rūm* 30:21]

Marriage is a union of souls, in the deepest sense. Allah joins these two souls together so that they may enjoy tranquillity and stability in a marital home filled with sincere love and compassionate mercy.

In Islam, the righteous woman is viewed as one of the joys of this life, and a great blessing to a man, for he comes home to her and relaxes after facing the struggles of life, and finds with her incomparable peace, comfort and pleasure. The Prophet (SAAS) spoke the truth when he said:

> "This world is just temporary conveniences, and the best comfort in this word is a righteous woman." [Muslim]

Islam regards marriage very highly, and views femininity as something to be valued and cherished.

The ideal Muslim wife

On the basis of this view of marriage and of women, the Muslim is not attracted by the empty-headed attitude displayed by some girls nowadays. Rather, he is attracted by a sound Muslim personality, and he takes his time in choosing a partner for life, looking for a partner who has the right Islamic characteristics which will make for a stable and happy married life. Therefore he is not interested in the superficial physical beauty, grace and elegance that are the sole concern of empty-headed youngsters. While he does not ignore physical looks, he also looks for strong religious belief and practice, intelligence, and good behaviour, following the advice of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "A woman may be married for four things: for her wealth, for her noble descent, for her beauty or for her religion. Choose the one who is religious, may your hands be rubbed with dust!" [Agreed upon]

Although the Prophet (SAAS) advised the young Muslim to look for a religious wife, this does not mean that he should ignore his

preferences regarding physical beauty. The Prophet (SAAS) encouraged seeing a woman before finalizing the marriage, so that a Muslim will not find himself trapped in a marriage with a woman he finds unattractive.

Al-Mughīrah ibn Sha'bah said:

> "I got engaged to a woman at the time of the Prophet (SAAS). He asked me, 'Have you seen her?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'Go and have a look at her, because it is more fitting that love and compatibility be established between you.'"[1]

A man who had got engaged to a woman of the *Anṣār* came to the Prophet (SAAS), who asked him: "Have you seen her?" He said, "No." so the Prophet (SAAS) ordered him to go and see her.[2]

The Prophet (SAAS) emphasized, in more than one *ḥadīth*, the fact that beauty is one of the basic characteristics that a man should look for in a woman, besides the other, moral, characteristics that are desirable. Indeed, the two are inseperable. For example, he told Ibn 'Abbās:

> "Shall I tell you the most precious thing a man can have? It is a righteous wife: when he looks at her he is pleased, when he tells her to do something she obeys, and when he is away she is faithful and loyal to him."[3]

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[1]Reported by al-Nisā'ī, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2]Reported by al-Nisā'ī and Ibn Mājah, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[3]Reported by al-Ḥākim, who said it is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was asked: 'Which woman is the best?' He said, 'The one who pleases him when he looks at her, who obeys him when he tells her to do something, and who does not do something he dislikes with regard to herself or to his wealth.'"[1]

This is the guidance given by the Prophet (SAAS) regarding the personality of the woman who can bring happiness, tranquillity and stability to a man, and who can make a cheerful, pleasant and secure home in which to raise a brood of successful, courageous, intelligent children. The Prophet (SAAS) insisted that marriage should be firmly built on a solid foundation, striking a balance between physical, mental, spiritual and emotional needs, so that it will not be rocked by personality clashes or differences in attitude. Therefore the true Muslim who is guided by the *sharī'ah* of Allah in all his affairs, does not fall for the wiles of the "jezebels" who are the beautiful women of bad character; rather he tells people: "Beware of the 'jezebels'."[2]

He follows the guidance of Islam in his married life

After marriage, the true Muslim adheres to the Islamic injunction to treat his wife well. The Islamic recommendations concerning women, and the way in which Islam encourages men to respect them, are nothing short of amazing.

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[1] Reported by Imam Ahmad in al-Musnad, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2] "*Iyyākum wa khaḍrā' al-diman*" (literally, "Beware of the greens of dung") is a well-known saying in Arabic. It is a proverb, not a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (SAAS). [Author]

Islam recommends men to treat women well, and gives them a status that they have never enjoyed in any other religion. So we see the Prophet (SAAS) admonishing all men:

> "Treat women kindly, for woman was created from a rib. The part of it that is most bent is the top. If you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you leave it alone it will remain bent. So treat women kindly." [Agreed upon]

According to a report given by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, he (SAAS) said:

> "Woman is like a rib: if you try to straighten it you will break it, and if you enjoy her (or your relationship with her), you will do so in spite of her crookedness."

According to a report given by Muslim, he (SAAS) said:

> "Woman was created from a rib. She will never be straightforward and consistent for you in any way. If you enjoy her (or your relationship with her), you will do so in spite of her crookedness. If you try to straighten her, you will break her, and her breaking is her divorce."

This description given by the Prophet (SAAS) eloquently describes the reality and nature of woman. She will not remain consistent in the way her husband may wish, but the Muslim husband must understand that this is her nature, the way she has been created. He should not try to straighten her in the way he is convinced is correct, but he should respect her unique feminine nature and accept her the way Allah made her, complete with the

"crookedness" that means that she will not be as he wishes in some aspects. If he insists on straightening her and moulding her to his wishes, it will be like trying to straighten a bent rib: it will break in his hands, and the breaking of a woman is divorce (i.e., the matter will end in divorce).

When the Muslim husband truly follows this guidance of the Prophet (SAAS), which is based on a deep understanding of the psychology and nature of women, he will tolerate his wife's mistakes and turn a blind eye to her faults, recognizing that these are part of her nature. Thus the marital home will be safe and calm, free from shouting or arguments.

We may note that in the *ḥadīth* quoted above, the Prophet (SAAS) started with the words "Treat women kindly," then after analyzing the nature of woman, he ended with the same words: "Treat women kindly." How great was the concern of the Prophet (SAAS) for women, and how deep was his understanding of their psychology! Does the sincere Muslim husband have any choice but to follow this guidance and put it into practice at every moment?

The Prophet's concern for women reached such an extent that he did not forget to remind Muslims to treat them kindly, in his farewell sermon (*khuṭbat al-wadā'*). This is the *khuṭbah* in which the Prophet (SAAS) reiterated the essential points of Islam, when he realized that this was the last time he would stand and address the Muslims during Ḥajj. He did not omit to advise Muslims to treat women kindly, beginning his words concerning women with a warning that is indicative of his care and concern:

> ". . . Interact with women kindly, for they are prisoners and you have no other power over them than that, if they are guilty of open lewdness, then

> refuse to share their beds, and beat them, but not severely, but if they return to obedience, (then) seek not against them means of annoyance. You have rights over your women and they have rights over you. Your right over them is that they should not entertain at your hearth (or commit adultery with) anyone whom you dislike, and not to allow into your home anyone whom you dislike, and their right over you is that you should feed and clothe them well."[1]

This is good advice, in which every sincere Muslim husband recognizes the wisdom of the Prophet (SAAS) in defining the rights and duties of husband and wife in a framework of mercy and compassion towards women which leaves no room for even thinking of oppressing or harming one's wife.

The Prophet (SAAS) gave many recommendations concerning women, to the extent that he described the man who treats his wife well as being one of the best and among the élite of his *ummah*:

> "The believer who has the most perfect faith is the one whose behaviour is best, and the best of you are the ones who are best to their women."[2]

Some women came to the family of the Prophet (SAAS) complaining about their husbands. So the Prophet (SAAS) announced to the men:

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*

"Many women have visited the family of Muhammad, complaining about their husbands. Verily those are not the best among you."[1]

True Islam is pre-eminent in its fairness and respect towards women, and in its recommendation to husbands to treat their wives well even if they dislike them. This is something which women have never enjoyed throughout their history, except in this religion. Allah says in the Qur'ān:

"... live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good." [*al-Nisā'* 4:19]

This *āyah* touches the heart of the true Muslim, so that his anger is soothed and his dislike towards his wife is lessened. In this way Islam protects the sacred marriage bond from being exposed to the danger of turbulent emotions and the folly of changing moods. When a man came to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) and told him that he wanted to divorce his wife because he disliked her, 'Umar (RA) said, "Woe to you! Are families only built on love? Where is your consideration and care?"

The marriage bond in Islam is of greater importance than emotional whims and rises above the pressures of crazy animal urges. The true Muslim possesses enough chivalry, nobility, courtesy, patience, generosity and strength of character to make him rise above any dislike of his wife in his dealings with her. Far

[1]Reported by Abu Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī and Ibn Mājah. Ibn Hijr said in *al-Iṣābah:* "Its isnād is *ṣaḥīḥ.*"

be it from him to think only in terms of mindless animal instincts or making a profit!

The true Muslim cannot do other than obey his Lord; so he treats his wife well even if he dislikes her, because he understands the words of his wise Lord about the things that are hidden from him, and they are many. A man may dislike something and try to distance himself from it, when in fact it is full of goodness and blessing. The true Muslim knows how to love and how to hate. Love is not blind for him, neither does he go to extremes of dislike and hatred, but in either case his attitude is moderate and balanced.

The Prophet (SAAS) explained that even if a husband dislikes his believing Muslim wife, she will still have some favourable characteristics which will please him, so he should not ignore the good side of her character and focus only on the negative aspects:

> "No believing man should hate a believing woman. If he dislikes one of her characteristics, there will be others that do please him." [Muslim]

The true Muslim is an ideal husband

The true Muslim abides by the clear, unambiguous texts of the Qur'ān which command him to treat women fairly and decently. He cannot be other than an ideal husband, so his wife enjoys his gentle company and close companionship, no matter how long they stay together. When he comes home, he greets his wife and children with a smiling face and extends to them the blessed

greeting that Allah has enjoined and made the distinctive greeting of Islam[1]:

> **". . . But if you enter houses, salute each other - a greeting or blessing and purity as from Allah . . ."** [*al-Nūr* 24:61]

The Prophet (SAAS) encouraged Anas (RA) to use this greeting: "O my son, when you go home greet your family with *salām*: it will be a blessing for you and your family."[2]

It is truly a great blessing for a man to meet his family with a pleasant greeting, for it contributes to a happy, friendly and pleasant atmosphere. He should lend a hand if he sees that his wife needs his help, and he should say some words of comfort if he feels that she is complaining of tiredness, weariness or boredom. He should make her feel that she is living with a strong, generous, tolerant husband who will protect her and care for her, who cares about her and will meet all her legitimate needs as long as he is able.

He should also satisfy her femininity by making himself attractive to her - within Islamic limits - and should give her a share of his time and interest. He should not let his study, work, hobbies, responsibilities or friends take up all of his time and keep him from her. Islam guarantees woman's right to enjoy her husband to the extent that it even tells the husband not to spend all his time in worship, which is the best and most honourable of deeds, lest the balance and equilibrium upon which this religion is based be

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[1]The words with which Muslims should greet one another are "*al-salām 'alaykum*" (peace be upon you), not "Hi," "Hello," or "Good morning."

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī who said: it is a *hasan gharīb hadīth*.

disturbed. We see this in the report of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (RA), who says that when the Prophet (SAAS) learned of his overzealousness in worship, he said to him:

> "Have I not heard that you fast all day and stay up all night in prayer?" 'Abdullah said, "That is true, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (SAAS) told him: "Do not do that. Fast and break your fast, sleep and get up. For your body has a right over you, your eyes have a right over you, your wife has a right over you, and your visitors have a right over you." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Khawlah, the daughter of Ḥakīm, who was the wife of 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn (RA), came to the wives of the Prophet (SAAS) wearing a tattered dress and looking unkempt. They asked her, "What is wrong with you?" She told them about her husband: "At night he stays up in prayer, and during the day he fasts." They told the Prophet (SAAS) what she had said, so when he saw 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn, he admonished him and said, "Do you not have an example in me?" 'Uthmān said, "Of course, may Allah cause me to be sacrificed for you!" Later, she (Khawlah) came back wearing fine clothes and with a pleasant scent. According to another report, the Prophet (SAAS) told him: "O 'Uthmān, monasticism has not been prescribed for us. Do you not have an example in me? For by Allah, I am the one out of all of you who fears Allah the most and keeps most strictly within His bounds."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to instil this guidance in his Companions and showed them how to achieve fairness and balance between their spiritual lives and their private lives with

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[1]See *al-Ḥilyah*, 1/106; *Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd*, 3/394; *al-Kanz*, 8/305.

their spouses, until this fairness and balance became second nature to them. Then they would encourage one another to adhere to it, and would appeal to the Prophet (SAAS) if one of their number sought to go beyond the limits and was becoming extreme in his asceticism, self-denial and worship.

Imam al-Bukhārī narrated that Abū Juḥayfah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) established brotherhood between Salmān and Abū'l-Dardā'. Salmān visited Abū'l-Dardā' and saw Umm al-Dardā' looking unkempt. He asked her, 'What is the matter with you?' She said, 'Your brother Abū'l-Dardā' has no need of this world.' Abū'l-Dardā' came and made some food for him, and told him: 'Eat; I am fasting.' Salmān said, 'I will not eat until you eat,' so he ate. That night, Abū'l-Dardā' wanted to spend the night in prayer, but Salmān told him to sleep, so he went to sleep. Then he wanted to get up, but Salmān again told him to sleep. In the last part of the night, Salmān told him, 'Now get up.' So they prayed, and Salmān told him: 'Your Lord has a right over you, your soul has a right over you, and your wife has a right over you, so fulfil your duty to each one who has a right over you.' Abū'l-Dardā' came to the Prophet (SAAS) and told him about what had happened, and the Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Salmān is right.'"

The conscientious Muslim does not neglect to relieve the tedium of routine life with his wife, so he spices their daily life with a little gentle humour and playfulness from time to time. In doing so, he follows the example of the Prophet (SAAS) whose whole life is the highest example for us. Although he was constantly

busy with the overwhelming task of laying the foundations of Islam, building the Muslim *ummah*, directing the army in *jihād*, and numerous other concerns, he did not let that keep him from being an ideal husband to his wives, treating them in the best possible way, with a smiling face and a touch of gentle humour.

An example is the report given by 'Ā'ishah (RA) who said:

> "I came to the Prophet (SAAS) with some *harīrah* (a dish made with flour and milk) that I had cooked for him, and told Sawdah (RA) - as the Prophet (SAAS) was sitting between me and her - 'Eat.' She refused, so I said, 'Either you eat, or I will fill your face!' She still refused, so I put my hand in the *harīrah* and daubed her face with it. The Prophet (SAAS) laughed, put some *harīrah* in her hand, and told her: 'Do the same to her!'" In another report: "He lowered his knee (moved out of the way) so that she could get her own back on me, then she took some from the plate and wiped my face with it, and the Prophet (SAAS) laughed."[1]

Is this not an example of tolerance and an easy-going nature which makes a wife happy through a humorous and light-hearted attitude?

'Ā'ishah (RA) also reported that once, when she went on a journey with the Prophet (SAAS), she challenged him to a race, and won.

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[1]Al-Haythamī, 4/316; *al-Muntakhab* 4/393; *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 7/302. Al-Haythamī said: It was narrated by Abu Ya'lā, and its narrators are those who narrated in *Sahīh* (al-Bukhārī), except for Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Alqamah, whose *hadīth* is *hasan*.

Later, when she had gained weight, she raced him again, but this time he won, and told her, "This is for that."[1]

The generous-hearted Prophet (SAAS) was so keen to make his beloved young wife feel happy that he would call her to enjoy some innocent kinds of entertainment that would gladden her heart. 'Ā'ishah (RA) reports that on one occasion:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was sitting, and he heard some noise from people and children outside. There was a group of people gathered around some Abyssinians who were dancing. He said, 'O 'Ā'ishah, come and see!' I put my cheek on his shoulder and looked through the gap. Then he said, 'O 'Ā'ishah, have you had enough, have you had enough?' I said, 'No,' just to see how much I meant to him, and I saw him shifting his weight from one foot to the other" (i.e. he was tired, but he was willing to stay as long as she wanted to watch the spectacle.)[2]

In another report, 'Ā'ishah said:

> "By Allah, I saw the Prophet (SAAS) standing at the door of my room, when some Abyssinians were playing with spears in the mosque. The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) screened me with his cloak so that I could watch the spear-play over his shoulder.

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[1]A *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*, narrated by Ahmad and Abū Dāwūd.

[2]Reported by al-Nisā'ī via Yazīd ibn Rumān from 'Ā'ishah. See also different reports from her in *Fatḥ al-Bārī, Bāb al-'Īdayn* (chapter on the two Eids).

> He stayed there for my sake, until I had seen enough. So pay attention to young girls' need for entertainment." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

When he sees the example of the Prophet's kind behaviour, generosity and good humour towards his wives, the true Muslim cannot but treat his wife kindly and gently, with an easy-going attitude, so long as this is within the limits of permissible and innocent entertainment.

The true Muslim does not overreact and become angry for trivial reasons, as many ignorant husbands do, creating uproar if their wives offer them food that is not to their liking, or their meal is a little late, or any of the other reasons which often cause an inordinate amount of anger, arguments and trouble between the spouses. The Muslim who is truly following the example of the Prophet (SAAS) always remembers aspects of his character that remind him to be generous, kind and tolerant. So he remembers that one of the characteristics of the Prophet (SAAS) is that "he never criticized food. If he liked it, he ate it, and if he did not like it, he simply left it." [Agreed upon]

And he remembers that the Prophet (SAAS) asked his family for some simple food he could eat with bread. They told him, "We have nothing apart from vinegar." He asked them to bring it and said, "How good a simple food is vinegar, how good a simple food is vinegar." [Muslim]

Let them listen to this *hadīth*, those foolish husbands whose eyes flash with anger at their wives' mistakes, when their food is a little late or not to their liking. Their poor wives may have genuine, pressing reasons for making these mistakes, but these husbands become angry without caring to know those reasons, on the basis

of an incorrect understanding of the phrase "men are *qawwāmūn* over women"!

The true Muslim husband does not stop at showing kindness and generosity towards his wife, but he extends his respect and kindness towards her decent (female) friends. This is in accordance with the practice of the Prophet (SAAS). 'Ā'ishah (RA) narrated:

> "An old woman came to the Prophet (SAAS) and he smiled at her, showed her respect, and asked her, 'How are you? How have you been doing?' She answered, 'I am fine, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah.'" When she had left, 'Ā'ishah said, "Why did you welcome this old woman so warmly, in a way that you do not welcome anyone else?" The Prophet (SAAS) replied, "She used to come and visit us when Khadījah was alive. Do you not know that honouring the ties of friendship is part of faith?"[1]

A wife may become angry for any reason, and keep away from her husband, making him feel her anger. In this case, the Muslim husband responds with tolerance and kindness, based on his deep insight into the psychology and nature of woman, as the Prophet (SAAS) used to treat his wives whenever they were angry with him and kept away from him all day until night fell.

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[1]Reported by al-Ḥākim in *al-Mustadrak*; he said it is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the condition of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) said: "We Quraysh used to have control over our women. When we came to Madīnah we found a people whose women had control over them, and our women began to learn from their women. I used to live in al-'Awālī, among Banu Umayyah ibn Zayd. One day my wife was angry with me, and was arguing with me. I did not like this, but she told me, 'Do you not like me arguing with you? By Allah, the wives of the Prophet (SAAS) argue with him. They get angry and keep away from him all day, until night falls!' So I went to see Hafṣah and asked her, 'Do you argue with the Prophet (SAAS)?' She said, 'Yes.' I asked her, 'Do you get angry and keep away from him all day until night falls?' She said, 'Yes.' I said, 'The one who does that is doomed to loss! Do you not fear the anger of Allah on the account of the anger of His Prophet? Soon you will be condemned! Do not argue with the Messenger of Allah, and do not ask him for anything. Ask me for whatever you need.'" [al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nisā'ī] 'Umar came to the Prophet (SAAS) and told him about what had happened in his house, and the conversation he had had with Hafṣah, and the Prophet (SAAS) smiled.

The Muslim should develop this tolerant attitude, so that he will be following the example of the Prophet (SAAS) in his behaviour and deeds. Then he will be living proof that Islam is the religion of a superior lifestyle; and that the misery, disintegration, confusion and anxiety that individuals, families and societies are suffering from are caused by man's ignorance and misconceptions of the noble values promulgated by Islam. These are precious principles which, if adopted by the husband, would put an end to arguments and dividisons in family life, and would bring peace, stability, happiness and security to the home.

One of the most successful husbands

Hence the smart Muslim husband is one of the most successful husbands ever, and the most beloved to a faithful, pure, righteous wife, because of his adherence to the guidance of Islam. He has a deep and compassionate understanding of her nature and psychology, and he directs her towards the straight path of Islam, which is in complete harmony with the true nature of mankind. He recognizes her inclinations, desires and moods, and tries to reconcile between them and the ideal life and behaviour he wants for her, while never forgetting for an instant that she has been created from a bent rib, and straightening a bent rib is impossible.

He understands his wife and respects her feelings

The true Muslim always understands his wife and respects her feelings. He does not criticize her family or any of her relations in front of her, out of respect for her feelings. In return, she respects his feelings and does not do or say anything that may adversely affect any member of his family.

He does not disclose any secret that she has entrusted to him, or spread any story that she has told him in confidence, for carelessness in such matters all too often explodes into conflict between the spouses and extinguishes the love between them. The sincere Muslim husband is protected from all of that, so long as he continues to follow the guidance of Islam.

He helps her to make up for her failings and weaknesses

The sincere Muslim husband tries to make up for what his wife lacks, if he feels that she is lacking in knowledge or manners. He does this in the gentlest, kindest and most positive manner. If he encounters defiance or wilful deviance on her part, he brings her

back to the straight and narrow in a gentle, humane and intelligent manner, avoiding harsh criticism or rebuking her in front of people, no matter what the reason. The most hurtful thing for a woman is that someone should hear her being reprimanded or witness her being scolded. The true Muslim is the most sensitive and respectful towards the feelings of others.

He knows how to strike a balance between pleasing his wife and treating his mother with due kindness and respect

The sincere Muslim husband draws upon his intelligence, compassion and strength of character in his dealings with both his wife and his mother, in such a way that he does not offend either of them. So he cannot be disobedient towards his mother or oppressive towards his wife. Rather, he recognizes his mother's rights and treats her in the best possible way, while also recognizing his wife's rights. He does not detract from his wife's rights in the course of fulfilling his duty towards his mother and taking care of her. The truly sincere Muslim is able to do this, as long as he is truly conscious of Allah (i.e., has *taqwā*) and follows the guidance and teachings of Islam, which treat both mother and wife with fairness and give each her due status.

He fully understands his role as a protector and maintainer (*qawwām*) of women

With such good attitudes and gentle treatment, the Muslim husband wins the heart of his wife, so she does not disobey him in anything. Therefore the Muslim man has been given the position of *qawwām* over women, because of the characteristics which Islam instils in him, the qualifications it has given him and the the conditions and limits it has imposed on him:

> **"Men are the protectors and maintainers (*qawwāmūn*) of women, because of Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means..."** [*al-Nisā'* 4:34]

This position of *qawwām* brings with it some inconveniences, for it gives men responsibilities. The man is completely responsible for his wife:

> "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for those under his care. A ruler is a shepherd; a man is the shepherd of his family; a woman is the shepherd of her husband's house and children. For each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for those under his care." [Agreed upon]

This responsibility applies to every individual in an Islamic society, in which everyone is responsible in one way or another, because according to Islam, life is a serious matter, not something to be taken lightly.

Just as Islam has enjoined good treatment of woman and raised her status, so it has also commanded her to understand her role in life, and to stay within the limits of the *sharī'ah*, so that she may better fulfil her role in life as a partner to man in bringing up the next generation and making life more pleasant and enjoyable.

Similarly, just as Islam has required man to treat his wife kindly and take care of her properly, so it has commanded the wife to obey him within the limits of permissibility, fairness and justice. This obedience is most strongly emphasized, as is illustrated by the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "If I were to order anyone to prostrate to anyone else, I would have ordered the woman to prostrate to her husband."[1]

Indeed, he said that the husband's satisfaction with her would be a cause of her entering Paradise:

> "Any woman who dies, and her husband is pleased with her, will enter Paradise." [Agreed upon]

He assured the defiant, rebellious woman that the angels would heap curses upon her until she goes back to her husband:

> "If a woman stays away from her husband's bed, the angels will curse her until morning." [Agreed upon]

The concern of Islam to affirm man's position of *qawwām* over women and reinforce her obligation to obey and please him, goes as far forbidding her to fast at times other than Ramaḍān or to receive any guests without his permission:

> "The woman is not permitted to fast when her husband is present, without his permission, or to invite anyone into his house without his permission." [Agreed upon]

Islam gave the husband this right to be *qawwām* over his wife so that he will be a real man, knowing how to steer the ship of family life towards the shore of safety and guidance. Islam warns all men against the trial and temptation (*fitnah*) of women, which may

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

make them heedless and weak, and lessen their religious commitment, so that they turn a blind eye to the waywardness and unIslamic behaviour of their wives. In such a case a husband has no say: his wife is controlling everything in the home, so that he dare not disobey her, or answer her back, or refuse any of her whims. The Prophet (SAAS) was right when he said that this is the most damaging of trials and temptations that a man can be faced with:

> "There will be no *fitnah* after my death that is worse for men than the *fitnah* of women." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim husband is a man who is not weak in dealing with the trial of having a wayward wife, no matter how difficult that *fitnah* is. He gently makes it clear to her that no matter how much he loves her, he loves Allah and the Prophet more, and his desire to please Allah is stronger than his feelings for her:

> **"Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates or your kindred; the wealth that you have gained; the commerce in which you fear a decline; or the dwellings in which you delight - are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or the striving in His cause - then wait until Allah brings about His Decision: and Allah guides not the rebellious."** [*al-Tawbah* 9:24]

In this way, the female waywardness which we see in many so-called Muslim homes will be done away with. The man who sees his wife, daughters and sisters going out in the street with make-up, uncovered heads and bare arms, clothed but seeming naked, and does nothing to stop this disobedience of Islam, has surely lost

his manhood, abandoned Islam and earned the wrath of Allah. There is no way out of his predicament but sincere repentance which will wake him up, restore his manhood and set him back on the straight path.

Islam has set out standards for women, and has defined the kind of clothing she should wear when she goes out in the street or appears in from of men who are non-*mahram*. This type of clothing is known as *ḥijāb*. The Muslim woman who has been nurtured in pure Islam and has grown up in its protective atmosphere accepts this *ḥijāb* willingly and with a deep sense of conviction, knowing that it is from Allah, and that it is not a tyranny designed by men to satisfy their egotistical desires to control women, or a custom invented during the decadent Umawī (Umayyad) period, as is claimed by those worthless fools who have no sound proof from the Qur'ān whatsoever.

In a report narrated by al-Bukhārī, 'Ā'ishah (RA) said: "May Allah have mercy on the early *muhājir* women. When Allah revealed **'. . .they should draw their veils over their bosoms. . .'** [*al-Nūr* 24:31] they tore their aprons and covered their heads and faces with them." In another report, also given by al-Bukhārī, she said: "They cut their waist-sheets at the edges and covered their heads and faces with the cut pieces."

Ṣafiyyah bint Shaybah said:

> "While we were with 'Ā'ishah (RA) we mentioned the women of Quraysh and how good they were. 'Ā'ishah (RA) said: 'The women of Quraysh are good but by Allah I have never seen any better than the women of the *Anṣār* or any more convinced of the Book of Allah or with a deeper faith in the Revelation. When *Sūrat al-Nūr* was revealed -

". . . they should draw their veils over their bosoms..." - the men turned to their wives, daughters, sisters and other female relatives and recited these words to them. Not one of them failed to take her decorated wrapper and wrap it around her head and face, in acceptance of and belief in what Allah had revealed. The next morning they were behind the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) wrapped up in their veils, looking as if they had black crows on their heads.'"[1]

Many Allah have mercy on the women of the *Anṣār*: how strong was their faith, how sincere was their Islam and how beautiful was their response to the Truth when it was revealed! Every woman who truly believes in Allah and His Messenger cannot do other than to adhere to the distinctive Islamic dress, regardless of whatever nakedness and *tabarruj* (wanton display) surrounds her. I remember a veiled Muslim student at the University of Damascus whose attitude was no less commendable than that of the women of the *Anṣār* (RA); when a visiting journalist asked her about her *ḥijāb* and why she was putting up with it in the heat of summer, she quoted: **". . . Say: 'The Fire of Hell is fiercer in heat' . . ."** [*al-Tawbah* 9:81]

It is pure, sincere Muslim girls like this who will establish Muslim families, raise the next generation in a sound way and fill society with strong, productive men. Nowadays there are many such girls, *al-ḥamdulillah*!

The sincere Muslim is responsible for his womenfolk's adherence to the Islamic teachings regarding her going out, and the *ḥijāb*

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[1]See *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

which is the badge of the Muslim woman. The day when a husband lets his wife or his environment take over and dispenses with this Islamic ruling without being able to stand up to them, is the day he says good-bye to both his religion and his manhood.

The husband's responsibility for his wife does not stop with her outward appearance, but also includes her worship and conduct. He is responsible for her if she omits some act of worship, or if she neglects or deliberately ignores her duties towards Allah. He is responsible for her good behaviour and completion of her duties. Any shortcomings on her part will detract from her husband's manhood, diminish his Islam and damage the role of *qawwām* with which Allah has honoured him.

Islam considers women to be a trust which has been given to men for safe-keeping. As the wife is usually influenced by her husband, he may take her with him to Paradise or lead her to Hell. Therefore Allah ordered the believing men to protect both themselves and their families from the Fire and gave a terrifying picture of the awful fate that awaits them if they neglect their responsibilities towards their wives anf families and fail to compel them to adhere to the truth:

> **"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones, over which are (appointed) angels stern (and) severe, who flinch not (from executing) the Commands they receive from Allah, but do (precisely) what they are commanded."**
> [*al-Taḥrīm* 66:6]

The role of *qawwām* over women which Islam gives to men cannot truly be fulfilled unless the husband is a successful leader of his family. The Muslim husband does not assert his manhood through

roughness, cruelty, violence and harsh words. This is the manhood of ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*); Islamic manhood is something else altogether. The Islamic ideal of manhood is: a strong and likeable personality; a noble attitude; tolerance and forgiveness of minor mistakes; strong adherence to the laws of Allah and determination to apply them to every member of his family; brilliant leadership in guiding his family to the truth; generosity without being extravagant; a thorough understanding of his responsibilities in this world and the next; and a clear idea of the ideal Muslim home. These are the characteristics of the true Muslim as Islam wants him to be.

CHAPTER 5

THE MUSLIM AND HIS CHILDREN

Introduction

Children are the apple of a man's eye, the source of great joy and companionship. They make life sweet and, after Allah, they are the ones on whom he pins his hopes. Their blessing brings *rizq*, mercy and an abundance of reward.

But this depends on the children having a good, solid upbringing, which will make them respectful, kind, and a source of happiness. If a man's children have these good attributes then they will truly be joys of this life, as Allah described them in the Qur'ān:

> **"Wealth and sons are allurements (joys) of the life of this world . . ."** [*al-Kahf* 18:46]

For this reason the Prophet (SAAS) used to pray for those whom he loved, that Allah would grant them wealth and children in abundance. Anas (RA) reported that he entered upon the Prophet (SAAS) with his mother and maternal aunt. The Prophet (SAAS) led them in prayer, then he prayed (made *du'ā'*) for them. Umm Anas said, "O Messenger of Allah, your little servant, pray for him." So the Prophet (SAAS) prayed for him, and at the end of his *du'ā'* said: "O Allah, grant him wealth and children in abundance, and bless him." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

But if the parents neglect their children's upbringing, the results will be disastrous. Their children will be a source of annoyance, frustration and constant concern, not to mention nights of lost sleep and days of worry.

He understands his great responsibility towards his children

The true Muslim understands his great responsibility towards the children he has brought into this world, as the Qur'ān tells him:

> **"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your family from a Fire whose fuel is Men and Stones . . ."** [*al-Tahrīm* 66:6]

He also appreciates the responsibility that the Prophet (SAAS) has placed upon him:

> "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock; a woman is the shepherd in the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock; the servant is the shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock." [Agreed upon]

Islam has placed a burden of responsibility on the shoulders of all people, from which none may be excused. Above all, parents are responsible for providing their children with a sound Islamic education and upbringing, based on the noble characteristics which the Prophet (SAAS) mentioned that he had been sent to complete and spread among people:

> "I have only been sent to make righteous behaviour complete."[1]

There is no greater proof of the gravity of parents' responsibility to bring their children up to obey Allah and His Messenger, than the verdict of the *'ulamā'* that every family should heed the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Instruct your children to pray when they are seven years of age, and hit them if they do not pray when they are ten."[2]

Every family which is aware of this *ḥadīth* but the parents do not teach their children to pray when they reach seven or hit them if they do not do so when they reach ten, is a family that is failing in its duty and neglecting its childen. These parents are sinners who are responsible before Allah for this failure and neglect.

The home is the first environment in which these little ones grow: it is the milieu in which their inclinations, attitudes and personalities are formed. This explains the importance of the parents' role in nurturing their young ones and paying equal attention to their physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

He uses the best methods in bringing them up

The true Muslim parent - whether father or mother - understands the psychology of his or her children and knows how to deal with them, using the best and most effective methods of parenting and

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Imam Mālik in *al-Muwattā'*, and Imam Ahmad in *al-Musnad*.

[2]Reported by Ahmad, Abu Dāwūd and al-Hākim. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

upbringing. He endears himself to them in all kinds of ways, and gets close to them, according to their age and mental levels, so he plays with them, praises them, jokes with them and tells them words of love and care which make them happy. Then they will love him, and accept his direction eagerly. When they obey him, it will be from the heart, for there is a great difference between the obedience which is based on love, respect and trust, and that which is based on violence and cruelty. The former is lasting obedience, while the latter is shallow and baseless, and will quickly vanish when the violence and cruelty reach extreme levels.

Some people think that if the father comes down to his children's level and interacts closely with them, this will diminish his paternal status in their eyes and undermine his parenting efforts. Nothing could be further from the truth, for this kind of approach is the most efficient method of raising children properly, and is promoted by modern experts. It is also the method promoted by the Prophet (SAAS) fifteen hundred years ago, and clearly demonstrated by him in word and deed.

The Prophet (SAAS) used to line up 'Abdullah, 'Ubaydullah and Kuthayyir, the sons of al-'Abbās (RA) and say: "Whoever reaches me first, I will give him such-and-such." So they would race towards him and jump on his back and chest, kissing him.[1]

Al-Bukhārī, in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and al-Ṭabarānī reported from Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (SAAS) took the hand of al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn (RA), then put his feet on his foot and said, "Climb up."

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad. Al-Ḥāfiẓ said in *al-Tahdhīb* (8/421) that its *isnād* is *mursal jayyid*.

There is no clearer demonstration of the spirit of the great educator (SAAS) than in the way he carried al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (RA), and treated them with love and care, thus setting an example for fathers and grandfathers everywhere, no matter how great their status and influence, to treat these tender young shoots in the most gentle and caring way. This may be seen in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī from Shaddād:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) went out carrying al-Ḥasan or al-Ḥusayn, and when he came forward to lead the prayer, he put the child down and commenced the prayer. He prostrated himself and stayed in that position for a long time. I raised my head and saw the child on his back, so I returned to my prostration. When he had finished praying, the people said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you prostrated for such a long time.' He said, 'My child was riding on my back, and I did not like to disturb him until he had had enough.'"[1]

The Muslim should be in the habit of being involved with his children, treating them with love and kindness and joking with them, as much as he can and whenever he finds the opportunity, so that their hearts will be filled with happiness.

He demonstrates his love and affection for them

One of his primary paternal duties is to demonstrate his love, mercy and affection towards his children so that they will grow up confident, positive, optimistic and with high levels of self-esteem.

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad and al-Nisā'ī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

Compassion is a basic Islamic characteristic, and was one of the most prominent characteristics of the Prophet (SAAS), as Anas (RA) told us:

> "I never saw anyone who was more compassionate towards children than the Messenger of Allah (SAAS). His son Ibrāhīm was in the care of a wet-nurse in the hills around Madīnah. He would go there, and we would go with him, and he would enter the house, pick up his son and kiss him, then come back." [Muslim]

The Prophet's mercy and love towards the Muslim children included little ones at play. Anas (RA) reports that whenever the Prophet (SAAS) passed by a group of boys he would smile fondly and greet them. [Agreed upon]

An example of his enduring educational wisdom is the advice:

> "He is not one of us who does not show compassion to our little ones and recognize the rights of our elders."[1]

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) kissed al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ali, and al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis said: 'I have ten children, and I have never kissed any of them.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.'" [Agreed upon]

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ḥākim. Its *isnād* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.

The Prophet (SAAS), this great educator, always sought to instil the quality of mercy and compassion in people's hearts, and to awaken their potential for love and affection, which are the most basic of human characteristics.

One day a Bedouin came and asked the Prophet (SAAS), "Do you kiss your sons? We do not." The Prophet (SAAS) said, "What can I do for you if Allah has removed mercy from your heart?" [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

'Ā'ishah (RA) reports:

> "Whenever Fāṭimah came into the room, the Prophet (SAAS) would stand up, welcome her, kiss her and offer her his seat, and whenever he came into the room, she would stand up, take his hand, welcome him, kiss him and offer him her seat. When she came to see him during his final illness, he welcomed her and kissed her."
> [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

In the light of this guidance, the true Muslim cannot be stern towards his children and treat them in a rough or mean fashion, even if it is his nature to be grim and reserved, because this religion, with its enlightenment and guidance, softens hearts and awakens feelings of love and affection. So children are a part of us, going forth into the world, as the poet said:

> "Our children are our hearts, walking among us on
> the face of the earth,/

> If even a little breeze touches them, we cannot sleep for worrying about them."[1]

Parents should be filled with love, affection and care, willing to make sacrifices and do their best for their children.

He spends on them, willingly and generously

Islam does not rely only on the parents' natural instincts to care for their children, because sometimes parents may be reluctant to give up some of life's pleasures for the sake of their children, or else hard times and poverty may cause parents to complain about the heavy burden of expenses. So Islam reinforces the parents' natural instincts to care for their children by promising them a great reward, which encourages them to make sacrifices and helps them to bear their poverty.

Umm Salamah said:

> "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, will I be rewarded for what I spend on the children of Salamah? I am not going to abandon them in any case, for they are my children too.' He said, 'Yes, you will be rewarded for what you spend on them.'"
> [Agreed upon]

Abū Mas'ūd al-Badrī (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'When a man spends on his family with the intention of pleasing Allah,

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[1]These lines by the poet Hittān al-Mu'allī are to be found in *Sharh al-Hamāsah* by *al-Tabrīzī*, 1/275.

then it will be counted as *ṣadaqah* (charity) on his part.'" [Agreed upon]

Islam considers spending on one's wife and children to be one of the best kinds of spending, one of the deeds which will bring the greatest rewards. This is borne out by the *ḥadīth* which Muslim reported from Abū Hurayrah (RA), who said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Money you spend for the sake of Allah, money you spend to free a slave, money you give in charity to the poor, and money you spend on your family . . . The greatest in reward of all of these is spending on your family." [Agreed upon]

In another report, narrated by Muslim, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The best money a man can spend is money he spends on his children, money he spends on his mount for the purpose of *jihād*, and money he spends on his friends for the sake of Allah."

The true Muslim is happy to spend on his family, because he is certain that whatever he spends on them and others, with the intention of pleasing Allah, will bring him reward, even the morsel of food which he may raise to his wife's mouth in a light-hearted gesture of affection. This is clear from the *ḥadīth* narrated by Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ (RA), that the Prophet (SAAS) told him:

> "You will never spend anything for the sake of Allah without there being a reward for it, even the food which you put in your wife's mouth." [Agreed upon]

The true Muslim cannot abandon his children and leave them in poverty and misery, when he hears the words of the Prophet (SAAS) threatening men who neglect their responsibilities towards their families and warning them of the worst punishment and torment in the Hereafter:

> "It is sin enough for a man to forsake those who are under his care." [Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, *et al.*]

He does not discriminate between sons and daughters in his affection and spending

Some people are disappointed to have daughters, and wish that Allah had given them only sons. They do not know of the great reward which Allah has promised to the father who has been given daughters, and accepts them, takes care of them, gives them a good upbringing, and showers love and affection upon them. If they knew the reward that awaits the caring, merciful father of girls, they would feel jealous of him and would want that for themselves too.

The Prophet (SAAS) said,

> "Whoever has three daughters, and is patient with them, gives them food and drink, and clothes them from his earnings, they will be for him a shield against the Fire of the Day of Resurrection."[1]

In another report, he (SAAS) said:

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[1]Narrated by Ahmad in *al-Musnad*, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

"Whoever has three daughters and shelters them, provides what they need and shows compassion towards them, will certainly deserve Paradise." A man among the people asked, "And if they are two, O Messenger of Allah?" And he said, "Yes, even if they are two."

How could any man resent bringing up daughters and spending on them when he hears of the rewards and blessings that Allah has promised him?

Islam, this practical religion which recognizes the realities of people's lives in all times and places, recognizes the fact that a daughter may get divorced and return to her father's house, and that her father may be in straitened circumstances with a low income or many other children to care for, so it offers him the comfort that will soothe his troubled spirit and ease his stress. Islam tells this father that whatever he spends on his daughter who has come home to him is one of the greatest acts of charity and one of the deeds that will bring him closest to Allah.

The Prophet (SAAS) said to Surāqah ibn Ju'sham: "Shall I not tell you about the greatest form of charity?" He said, "Of course, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Your daughter who has come back to you and has no other breadwinner."[1]

What comparison can there be between the great affection and love with which children in the Muslim world are nurtured, and the harsh life suffered by children in the West, where when a child, boy or girl, has barely reached the age of eighteen, he leaves the family home to face the stark realities of life and to struggle to

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

earn a living before he is ready to or before he has had enough love and support from his family? There is a huge difference between the laws of Allah, which bring happiness to mankind, and the inadequate laws of man which only cause suffering. Not surprisingly, in western countries, as a result of these materialistic laws, there are armies of promiscuous young men and hordes of unfortunate young unmarried mothers, and their numbers are increasing daily.

He is alert to everything that may have an influence on them

The smart Muslim father keeps his eyes open as far as his children are concerned. He knows what they are reading and writing, the hobbies they have chosen or which he may have encouraged them to follow, without them realizing it, the friends with whom they spend most of their time, and the places they go in their spare time. He knows all of this without his children feeling that he is watching them. If he finds anything objectionable in their reading-material or hobbies, or finds that they are hanging around with undesirable friends, or going to unsuitable places, or taking up bad habits like smoking, or wasting time and energy on *ḥarām* games that make them accustomed to trivialities and idle pursuits, he puts them straight in a gentle and wise manner, and persuades them to return to the straight and narrow.

Every new baby is born in a state of *fiṭrah* (the natural state of man), and it is parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, as is mentioned in the *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī. Hence the parents' responsibility regarding the upbringing of the child and the formation of his personality is clear.

The books which children spend time reading should be broadening their minds, building their personalities and offering

them good examples; they should not be corrupting them and extinguishing the flame of goodness in their hearts.

Hobbies should nurture the positive aspects of the children and instil in them good taste, not encourage them to follow falsehood. Their friends should be of the type who will keep them on the Straight Path and lead them to Paradise, not those who will corrupt them and lead them to Hell. How many people have been brought to the slippery slope of destruction and perdition by their friends, when their fathers were unaware of what was happening to their own children! How wise are the words of the poet 'Adiyy ibn Zayd al-'Ibādī concerning friends:

> "If you are among people, then make friends with the best of them./
> Do not make friends with the worst of them lest you become as bad as he is./
> Do not ask about the man, but ask about his friend, for evey person is influenced by his friends."[1]

The true Muslim father takes notice of his children's books, magazines, hobbies, school, teachers, clubs, media interests, and everything that may have an impact on their personalities, minds, souls and faith. He should intervene when necessary, either to encourage or to put a stop to something, so that the children's upbringing will not be affected by corruption or sickness.

Hence we can explain the success of some families in raising their children, and the failure of others. The former feel responsible towards their children and take care of them properly, so the children become good for the family and the community at large;

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[1] *Dīwān 'Adiyy*, p. 107.

the latter do not feel this responsibility, so they neglect their children, and the children become bad for their family and the community at large, a source of distress in their life and after death. Allah has spoken the truth:

> **". . . Truly, among your wives and your children are (some that are) enemies to yourselves, so beware of them! . . ."** [*al-Taghābun* 64:14]

Children would not have turned against their parents if their parents had kept to the right path, recognized their responsibilities towards their children and done their duty as they should.

He treats all his children equally

One of the elements of wise upbringing is for the parents to treat all their children equally, and not to favour one of them over the others in any way. The child who feels that he is treated fairly and that he and his brothers are equal, will grow up with a healthy self-esteem, free from feelings of inferiority; he will not hate his brother, or eat his heart out with jealousy, but will be content, tolerant, kind and caring towards others. This is what Islam encourages and orders parents to do.

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim narrated from al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr (RA):

> "My father brought me to the Prophet (SAAS) and said, 'I have given this son of mine a slave I have.' The Prophet (SAAS) asked him, 'Have you given each of your children the same?' He said, 'No,' so the Prophet (SAAS) told him: 'Then take the slave back.'"

According to another report Nu'mān said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) asked, 'Have you done the same for all your children?' [My father] said, 'No,' so the Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Fear Allah and treat all of your children equally.' So my father went and took back his gift."

According to a third report:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) asked, 'O Bishr, do you have any other children?' He said, 'Yes.' The Prophet (SAAS) asked, 'Will you give a similar gift to each of them?' He said, 'No.' So the Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Do not ask me to witness this, because I do not want to witness unfairness.' Then he added, 'Would you not like all of your children to treat you with equal respect?' [Bishr] said, 'Of course.' The Prophet (SAAS) told him: 'So do not do it.'" [Agreed upon]

Therefore the Muslim who fears Allah treats all his children with equal fairness, and does not favour one above the other in giving gifts, spending money on him or in the way he treats him. So all of them will pray for him, love him and treat him with kindness and respect.

He instils good behaviour and attitudes in them

When children's hearts are thus filled with contentment and goodness, the father can then raise them up to the level of high morals and noble human virtues. So he instils in them good manners such as caring for others, helping the weak, being kind to relatives, respecting elders, being merciful to the young, cheerfully doing good and striving to spread justice among people. A person cannot give that which he does not have. The man was right who

said, "Righteousness comes from Allah and good manners come from parents."[1]

The smart Muslim father understands his children's psychology and knows how to instil wisdom and good attitudes in them, using the best methods of parenting in order to do so, such as setting a good example, coming down to their level, treating them well, and cheerfully showing mercy, humility, love, interest, encouragement, fairness, advice, correction and guidance. He is lenient towards them without being weak, and is strict without being cruel. Thus the children will grow up in an atmosphere of care, compassion and affection, that can only produce caring, kind, loyal and righteous children whose personalities are strong, who are willing to give and to shoulder their responsibilities. This is the norm for families who raise their children on Islamic principles and the teachings of the Qur'ān:

> **"... (We take our) colour from Allah, and who is better than Allah at colouring ? ..."**
> [*al-Baqarah* 2:138 - Pickthall's translation]

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[1] Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-Mufrad,* 92.

CHAPTER 6

THE MUSLIM AND HIS RELATIVES

Arḥām

A Muslim's kindness, respect and good treatment are not limited just to his parents, spouse and children, but extend to his relatives, all of whom he should treat well. In the Qur'ān, the word used is *arḥām* (literally, "wombs"), which refers to relatives to whom a person is linked by ties of blood, whether they are his heirs or not.

Islamic view of kinship ties

Islam has recognized the ties of kinship in a way that is unparalleled in other religions or "isms"; it enjoins Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship and condemns the one who breaks this tie.

There is no greater proof of the emphasis placed by Islam on the ties of kinship than the vivid picture painted by the Prophet (SAAS), who described kinship (*raḥm*) as standing in the vast arena of creation and seeking refuge with Allah from being cut off: Allah answers its prayer, taking care of those who maintain the ties of kinship, and cutting off those who cut off these ties. This is seen in the *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayrah who said:

"The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Allah created the universe, and when He had finished, kinship (*raḥm*) stood up and said, "This is the standing up of one who seeks Your protection from being cut off." Allah said, "Yes, would it please you if I were to take care of those who take care of you and cut off those who cut you off?" It said, "Of course." Allah said, "Then your prayer is granted."'" Then the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Recite, if you wish: **'Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief, in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.'** [*Muhammad* 47:22-23]"
[Agreed upon]

Many *āyāt* of the Qur'ān reiterate and affirm the position of *arḥā m* in Islam, encouraging people to uphold the ties of kinship and instilling a strong sense of the importance of recognizing kinship rights and avoiding neglect of those rights , and warning against abuse of them. One of these *āyāt* is:

". . . Fear Allah, through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you) . . ." [*al-Nisā'* 4:1]

This *āyah* commands man to fear Allah first and foremost, then places respect for *arḥām* second to that *taqwā* in order to emphasize its importance.

For the true Muslim, the fact that *raḥm* is often mentioned in conjunction with belief in Allah and good treatment of parents, is enough to confirm its status and importance:

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents . . ." [*al-Isrā'* 17:23]

"And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift." [*al-Isrā'* 17:26]

"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet) . . ." [*al-Nisā'* 4:36]

Hence kind treatment of relatives comes one degree below kind treatment of parents on the scale of human relationships as defined by the Qur'ān; from there, kindness and respect extends to encompass all those needy members of the greater human family. This suits human nature, which is more inclined to start with kind treatment of those who are closer; it is also in harmony with the overall Islamic system of social organization and mutual responsibility which starts with the family then is readily extended first to relatives and then to society at large, in a spirit of mercy and friendship which makes life more pleasant and beautiful for mankind.

Upholding the ties of kinship is one of the major principles of Islam, one of the fundamentals that this religion has promoted from the first day the Prophet (SAAS) began to preach his message. It is one of the most characteristic features of Islamic law. This is reflected in the lengthy coversation of Abū Sufyān with Heraclius. When the emperor asked Abū Sufyān, "What does

your Prophet order you to do?" he answered, "He tells us: 'Worship Allah alone and do not associate anything with Him. Give up the religion of your forefathers.' He tells us to pray, to give charity, to be chaste and to uphold the ties of kinship." [Agreed upon]

Upholding the ties of kinship is counted as one of the major characteristics of this religion, along with pure monotheistic belief in Allah, establishing prayer, and adherence to truthfulness and chastity, which were being explained to those questioners for the very first time.

In the lengthy *hadīth* of 'Amr ibn 'Anbasah (RA) which includes many of the basic teachings of Islam, he said:

> "I entered upon the Prophet (SAAS) in Makkah (meaning at the beginning of his Prophethood), and asked him, 'What are you?' He said, 'A Prophet.' I asked, 'What is a Prophet?' He said, 'Allah has sent me.' I asked, 'With what has He sent you?' He said, 'He has sent me to uphold the ties of kinship, to break the idols and to teach that Allah is One and has no partner whatsoever..." [Muslim]

In this summary of the most important principles of Islam, the Prophet (SAAS) clearly gave precedence to upholding the ties of kinship and mentioned it among the foremost features of the faith. This is indicative of its high status in the framework of this religion which Allah has revealed as a mercy to the Worlds.

The sources of Islam go to great lengths to encourage upholding the ties of kinship, and warn against cutting them off. Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (RA) said:

> "A man said, 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a good deed that will grant me entrance to Paradise.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him, establish regular prayer, pay *zakāt*; and uphold the ties of kinship.'" [Agreed upon]

Upholding the ties of kinship appears in the same context as worshipping Allah, believing in His absolute unity, establishing regular prayer and paying *zakāt*. Hence it is one of the best of righteous deeds that will guarantee Paradise and save one from Hell.

Anas (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Whoever would like his *rizq* (provision) to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship.'" [Agreed upon]

So it is a blessing for the one who upholds the ties of kinship, a blessing which affects both his *rizq* and his life: his wealth will increase and he will live a longer and more blessed life.

Ibn 'Umar used to say: "Whoever fears his Lord and upholds the ties of kinship, his life will be extended, his wealth will increase and his family will love him more."[1]

As we have seen, upholding the ties of kinship brings blessing in a man's *rizq* and his life, mercy from Allah in this world and the next, and makes people love him and praise him. In contrast,

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[1]Narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

breaking those ties will spell disaster and misery for him, earning him the dislike of Allah and the people, and keeping him far from Paradise in the Hereafter. It is misery and deprivation enough for such a man to hear the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "The person who breaks the ties of kinship will never enter Paradise." [Agreed upon]

Even worse for him is the news that his presence may deny mercy to his fellows, as in the *ḥadīth* quoted by al-Bayhaqī in *Shu'ab al-Īmān*:

> "Mercy will not descend upon a people among whom is one who breaks the ties of kinship."

Hence the great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Hurayrah (RA) never liked to make supplication to Allah in a gathering in which a person who had broken the ties of kinship was present, because that would prevent mercy from descending and the *du'ā'* from being answered. In one Thursday night gathering, he said: "I urge everyone who has broken the ties of kinship to get up and leave us." No-one got up until he had said this three times. Then a young man got up and went to see a (paternal) aunt of his whom he had forsaken for two years. When he entered, she said, "O son of my brother, what brings you here?" He said, "I heard Abū Hurayrah say such-and-such." She told him, "Go back to him and ask him why did you say that?" (Abū Hurayrah) said: "I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'The deeds of the sons of Adam are shown to Allah every Thursday evening before *Jumu'ah*, and the deeds of one who breaks the ties of kinship are not accepted.'"[1]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and by Aḥmad in *al-Musnad*.

The sensitive Muslim who is hoping to earn the pleasure of his Lord and attain salvation in the Hereafter will be deeply shaken by the news given in these texts, that breaking the ties of kinship will cause mercy to be withheld from him and his *du'ā'* not to be answered. It will be a source of great misery to him to be in such a position, to do deeds which are of no avail, to seek the mercy of his Lord and not receive it. It is unimaginable that a true Muslim would ever break the ties of kinship.

Breaking the ties of kinship is a sin which the Muslim whose heart is filled with true guidance and the desire to obey Allah and earn His pleasure will never commit, because it is one of the sins that Allah has said will bring punishment; indeed, it is one of the foremost sins for which Allah will punish the one who is guilty of them both in this world and the next, as is stated in the *ḥadīth*:

> "There is no worse sin for which Allah will hasten the punishment of one who is guilty of it in this world - in addition to what awaits him in the Hereafter - than breaking the ties of kinship and oppressing others."[1]

The acts of breaking the ties of kinship and oppressing others are very much like one another, so the Prophet (SAAS) mentioned them together in this *ḥadīth*. For breaking the ties of kinship is a kind of *ẓulm* (wrongdoing, oppression), and what *ẓulm* can be worse than breaking off relations with one's own kin and destroying ties of love and affection?

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad, Abū Dāwud, al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

The Prophet (SAAS) described the oppression that befalls the ties of kinship when they are cut off:

> "The tie of kinship (*rahm*) is a close-knit relationship that comes from Allah, the Most Merciful (*al-Rahmān*).[1] It says: 'O my Lord, I have been oppressed, O my Lord, I have been cut off...' He answers, 'Will you not be content if I cut off the one who cuts you off and take care of the one who takes care of you?'" [al-Bukhārī]

Allah raised the status of the tie of kinship and honoured it by deriving its name, *rahm*, from one of His own names, *al-Rahman*. For He said:

> "I am *al-Rahman* (the Most Merciful), and I have created *rahm* and derived its name from My name. Whoever takes care of it, I will take care of him, and whoever cuts it off, I will forsake him."[2]

This indicates to the sensitive Muslim that the one who upholds the ties of kinship properly will enjoy the cool shade of his Lord's mercy, and the one who breaks those ties will be denied that shade, forsaken and abandoned.

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[1]The connection is clearer is Arabic, where *rahm* and *al-Rahmān* are derived from the same root. [Translator]

[2]A *hadīth qudsī* reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and by Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī.

The Muslim upholds the ties of kinship according to the teachings of Islam

The true Muslim upholds the ties of kinship and does not let his worldly concerns, wealth, wife or children distract him from keeping in touch with his relatives, honouring them and helping them. In doing so, he is following Islamic teaching, which regulates these relationships and ranks them in order of priority and degree of closeness, starting with the mother, then moving on to the father, then other relatives, from the most closely-related to others who are more distantly related. A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and asked, "O Messenger of Allah, who is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother, your mother, your mother, then your father, then those who are most closely related to you." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim earns two rewards when he treats his relatives with kindness and respect: one reward for maintaining the relationship, and another reward for giving charity. This gives him a greater incentive to give to his relatives, if they are in need. By doing so, he will earn two rewards from Allah, and will also win the affection of his relatives. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged Muslims to do, in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Zaynab al-Thaqafiyyah, the wife of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA), who said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'O women, give in charity even if it is some of your jewellery.' She said, I went back to 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd and told him, 'You are a man of little wealth, and the Prophet (SAAS) has commanded us to give charity, so go and ask him whether it is permissible for me to give you charity. If it is, I will do so; if not, I will give charity to someone else.' 'Abdullah said, 'No, you go and ask.' So I went, and I found a

woman of the *Anṣār* at the Prophet's door, who also had the same question. We felt too shy to go in, out of respect, so Bilāl came out and we asked him, 'Go and tell the Messenger of Allah that there are two women at the door asking you: Is it permissible for them to give *ṣadaqah* to their husbands and the orphans in their care? But do not tell him who we are.' So Bilāl went in and conveyed this message to the Prophet (SAAS), who asked, 'Who are they?' Bilāl said, 'One of the women of the *Anṣār*, and Zaynab.' The Prophet (SAAS) asked, 'Which Zaynab is it?' Bilāl said, 'The wife of Abdullah.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'They will have two rewards, the reward for upholding the relationship, and the reward for giving charity.'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to reaffirm the priority given to kind treatment of relatives at every opportunity. When the *āyah* **"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love . . ."** [*Āl 'Imrān* 3:92] was revealed, Abū Ṭalḥah went to the Prophet (SAAS) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, Allah says: **'By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give (freely) of that which you love . . .'** The most beloved of my properties is Bayrahā' (a date orchard), which I now give up as *ṣadaqah* to Allah, hoping to store up reward with Him. O Messenger of Allah, dispose of it as you wil' " The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Bravo! You have got the best ueal for your property. I have heard what you said, and I think that you should divide it among your relatives." Abū Ṭalḥah said, "I will do so, O Messenger of Allah." He divided it among his relatives and (paternal) cousins. [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) looked far back into history and evoked ties of kinship going back centuries, when he enjoined good treatment of the people of Egypt, as is recorded in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Muslim:

> "You will conquer Egypt, so when you conquer it, treat its people well, for they have protection (*dhimmah*) and the ties of kinship (*raḥm*)." Or he said: "... protection and the relationship by marriage (*ṣihr*)."

The *'ulamā'* explained that *raḥm* here referred to Hajar the mother of Ismā'īl, and *ṣihr* referred to Maryah, the mother of the Prophet's son Ibrāhīm - both of who came from Egypt.

What a display of loyalty and faithfulness and good treatment, which extends to the kinsfolk and countrymen of these two noble women down throughout the ages! It is no surprise, then, that the true Muslim willingly recognizes the rights of his relatives and eagerly fulfils his duty of treating them kindly and maintaining the relationship.

He maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives are not Muslim

The tolerance and humanity of Islam goes so far as to enjoin upholding the ties of kinship even if the relatives are not Muslim. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (RA) said:

> "I heard the Prophet (SAAS) openly saying: 'The family of Abu So-and-so are not my friends, for my friends are Allah and the righteous believers. But they have ties of kinship with me, which I will recognize and uphold.'" [Agreed upon]

When the *āyah* **"And admonish your nearest kinsmen"** [*al-Shu'arā'* 26:214] was revealed, the Prophet (SAAS) summoned Quraysh. They gathered and he addressed them both in general and specific terms: "O Banū 'Abdu Shams, O Banu Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū Murrah ibn Ka'b, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū 'Abdu Manāf, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū Hāshim, save yourselves from the Fire. O Banū 'Abdul Muṭṭalib, save yourselves from the Fire. O Fāṭimah, save yourself from the Fire. I cannot do anything to protect you from the punishment of Allah, but there are ties of kinship between us which I will recognize and uphold." [Muslim]

The Muslim's heart overflows with humane emotions which spill over into his good treatment of his relatives, even if they are not Muslim. The expression of the Prophet (SAAS), "but there are ties of kinship between us which I will recognize and uphold (literally 'moisten')" is an example of Arabic eloquence, a metaphor in which the kinship tie (*raḥm*) is likened to the earth, and is "irrigated" by upholding it, so that it bears fruits of love and purity; if it is cut off, it becomes barren and produces only hatred and animosity. The true Muslim is on good terms with everyone and is liked by everyone, as they see good characteristics embodied in him.

Hence 'Umar (RA) did not see anything wrong with giving a garment that the Prophet (SAAS) had sent to him to his half-brother (through his mother), who was a *mushrik*.
[al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

We have already seen how Islam encourages us to treat our parents with kindness and respect, even if they are *mushrikīn*, and now we see how it encourages us to treat our relatives equally well, even if they are not Muslims either. This is an indication of the tolerance and humanity of Islam, which is not surprising when we

remember the words of Allah to His Prophet: **"We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures"** [*al-Anbiyā'* 21:107], and the saying of the Prophet (SAAS): "Verily I have been sent to complete good behaviour and attitudes." [Malik, *al-Muwattā'*]

He fully understands the meaning of upholding the ties of kinship

For the true Muslim, upholding the ties of kinship is one of the teachings of his faith. It is not just the matter of spending money - it goes much further than that. These ties are upheld by spending money on poorer relatives; and also by visits which reinforce the relationship, spreading mutual love and kindness; by advising and helping one another selflessly; by speaking kind words to relatives; by greeting them warmly with a smiling face and caring attitude; and by other good deeds which will fill hearts with love and extend ties of mutual support among one's relatives. This was the advice of the Prophet (SAAS) who urged Muslims to uphold the ties of kinship in even the simplest ways:

> "Maintain your ties of kinship even if it is merely with a greeting (i.e. saying *al-salām 'alaykum*)"[1]

He maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives fail to do so.

The true Muslim maintains the ties of kinship even if his relatives fail to do so, because the one who upholds this tie purely for the sake of Allah and in adherence to the highest Islamic teachings, does not expect to be treated equally well by his relatives in return.

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[1]Reported by al-Bazzār, from Ibn 'Abbās, with several *isnāds* that support one another.

He always upholds the ties of kinship regardless of whether his relatives do so or not, to set an example in all his dealings with his relatives of the way Islam moulds people and makes them noble and decent. The Prophet (SAAS) reinforced this meaning of the true Muslim when he said:

> "The one who maintains a relationship with his relatives only because they maintain a relationship with him is not truly upholding the ties of kinship. The one who truly upholds those ties is the one who does so even if they break off the relationship." [al-Bukhārī]

The Prophet (SAAS) offered advice which serves to reinforce the attitude of kindness, patience, forgiveness and tolerance in the heart of the person who is trying to uphold the ties of kinship but receives only rejection and bad treatment in return. He stated that Allah is with whoever seeks to treat his relatives well but does not receive similar good treatment in return, and he painted a frightening picture of the sin which befalls those who deny good deeds and refuse to uphold the ties of kinship. A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, I have relatives with whom I try to keep in touch, but they cut me off; I treat them well, but they abuse me; I am patient and kind towards them, but they insult me." The Prophet (SAAS) said: "If you are as you say, then it is as if you are putting hot dust in their mouths. Allah will continue to support you as long as you continue to do that." [Muslim]

See how Allah extends His support and help to the one who puts up with bad treatment from his relatives in response to his efforts to uphold his ties with them! Allah fills his heart with patience to bear their abuse and gives him strength to maintain his noble atitude. The Prophet (SAAS) likens the sin which befalls those

hard-hearted miscreants to the pain which befalls the one who eats hot dust, as a punishment for their abuse and mistreatment of this warm-hearted, generous person who only seeks to do what is right.

So the true Muslim upholds the ties of kinship in every case, always seeking to earn the pleasure of his Lord, rising above the foolish insults and bad behaviour that occasionally occur among relatives, and refusing to become embroiled in the petty, trivial issues that occupy lesser minds and make people angry. The true Muslim knows better than to allow foolish, petty matters to affect his relationship with and attitude towards his relatives. He remembers the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "The tie of kinship (*raḥm*) is suspended from the throne of Allah, and says: 'Whoever supports me, Allah will support him, and whoever cuts me off, Allah will cut him off." [Agreed upon]

CHAPTER 7

THE MUSLIM AND HIS NEIGHBOURS

He is the best of people in his dealings with his neighbours

The Muslim who is truly aware of the teachings of his religion is the best of people in his dealings with his neighbours, and the most respectful, kind and considerate towards them.

He is aware of the Islamic teachings concerning good treatment of neighbours

He is aware of the many Islamic teachings concerning neighbours, and the high status given to them in the scale of human relationships, such as has never been equalled in any other religion or system before or since.

Allah has commanded the good treatment of neighbours in the Qur'ān:

> **"Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good - to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the Companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and what your right hands possess . . ."** [*al-Nisā*' 4:36]

The "neighbour who is near" is one with whom one shares ties of kinship or religion; the "neighbour who is a stranger" is one with whom one shares no such ties; and the "companion by your side" is a friend, colleague or travelling-companion.

Everyone whose home neighbours yours has the rights of a neighbour over you, even if you are not connected by kinship or religion. This honouring of the neighbour is an example of the tolerance promoted by Islam.

There are many *aḥādīth* of the Prophet (SAAS) which enjoin good treatment of neighbours in general, regardless of kinship or religious factors, and confirm the importance of the neighbourly relationship in Islam. For example:

> "Jibrīl kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to the extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs." [Agreed upon]

Islam gives such a high status to neighbours that when Jibrīl reiterated the importance of treating them well, the Prophet (SAAS) thought that he would raise neighbours to the level of kinship and give them similar rights of inheritance.

The Prophet (SAAS) followed Jibrīl's urging, and encouraged Muslims to honour neighbours and treat them well. In his historical *khuṭbah* during the Farewell Pilgrimage, in which he summarized the most important points of his teachings, he did not omit to mention neighbours and emphasized their rights to such an extent that the eminent *Ṣaḥābī* Abu Umāmah also thought that the Prophet (SAAS) would make neighbours heirs:

> "I heard the Prophet (SAAS), when he was seated on his she-camel during the Farewell Pilgrimage,

> saying, 'I enjoin you to treat your neighbours well,' and urging their good treatment so much that I thought, he is going to give them the rights of inheritance."[1]

The good treatment of neighbours and avoiding harming or annoying them is so important that the Prophet (SAAS) described it as one of the signs of true faith in Allah and the Last Day:

> "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him treat his neighbour well; whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or else remain silent."
> [Agreed upon]

According to a report given by al-Bukhārī, he (SAAS) said: "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him not harm or annoy his neighbour..."

The true Muslim is tolerant towards his neighbour

It comes as no surprise, then, that the Muslim who is truly guided by his faith is tolerant towards his neighbour, and is humble, easy-going and kind in his dealings with him. He does not stop him from using and enjoying his home, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No-one should prevent his neighbour from fastening a piece of wood to his wall."
> [Agreed upon]

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī with a *jayyid isnād*.

He likes for his neighbour what he likes for himself

The Muslim who is truly guided by his religion is soft-hearted and alert, and knows how to communicate well. He is sensitive towards his neighbour, sharing his joy and commiserating him in his sorrow. He likes for him what he likes for himself, following the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." [Agreed upon]

In a report given by Muslim from Anas, the Prophet (SAAS) said: "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, no servant truly believes until he likes for his neighbour (or he said: his brother) what he likes for himself."

The true Muslim does not forget to take care of his neighbours who may be affected by the smell of cooking or barbecues coming from his house, which may provoke feelings of hunger, especially if they are poor and cannot afford much food. There may be small children, orphans, widows or elderly among them. The true Muslim is always alert to the spirit of social responsibility which the Prophet (SAAS) instilled in the Muslims in the words he spoke to Abu Dharr:

> "O Abu Dharr, if you cook some broth, add extra water to it, and take care of your neighbour." [Muslim] According to another report he (SAAS) said, "If you cook some broth, add extra water to it, then think of the families in your neighbourhood and send some of it to them." [Muslim]

The Muslim's conscience will not let him ignore his neighbour's poverty and difficulty while he is living a life of ease and plenty.

How can he bear to see the difference between himself and his neighbour, when the words of the Prophet (SAAS) are ringing in his ears?

> "He does not believe in me, who eats his fill while his neighbour beside him is hungry, and he knows about it"[1]

> "He is not a believer, who eats his fill while his neighbour is hungry."[2]

The misery that befalls humanity because of the lack of true Islamic morals and manners

Hence we realize that the misery that has befallen humanity throughout the world has occurred because of the lack of true Muslims in positions of influence and authority, and because of the swamping of true Islamic principles by backward, manmade systems, which have brought nothing but misery, poverty, exploitation, hunger and nakedness to so many, at the same time when mankind has conquered space, launched rockets and satellites, and put men on the moon. The international food and agriculture organization attached to the United Nations announced in 1975[3] that between 20-100 million people in Africa and Asia faced the possibility of death from starvation in the next few years, and that if the situation were allowed to continued, 3 million

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī and al-Bazzār, with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī and Abu Ya'lā; the men in its *isnād* are trustworthy (*thiqāt*).

[3]The Arabic edition of this book was first published in 1981. Needless to say, matters have hardly improved in the two decades since these statistics were produced. [Translator]

would be likely to die every week, while between 460-1,000 million people were suffering from malnutrition.

In the same year, news agencies reported the story of a young European woman who had volunteered to work as a nurse in some region of Africa where the people were suffering from chronic malnutrition. She had a severe mental breakdown that verged on insanity, after witnessing a bloody fight between some African children whose hunger drove them to compete savagely for a piece of mango. The fight did not stop until one child had put out the eye of another. None of the children concerned was any older than 8 years. This hunger has also caused many cases of total blindness, because of the constant lack of vitamins; children are so severely underweight that they look like skeletons. They have little or no resistance to illness, and are truly between the jaws of death.

At a time when hunger is stalking Africa and Asia, we see the West, the rich nations who constitute only 20 % of the world's population but own 80 % of the world's wealth, going to insane lengths to hold on to this wealth. In 1975 Brazil burnt thousands of tonnes of coffee; the EEC (now known as the EU) spent $50 million to destroy surplus food and agricultural produce; and America pays its farmers $3,000 million annually for not growing anything - all to keep prices in the world's markets high! American farmers killed tens of thousands of calves, and buried them, to keep the price of meat high, when in the same year tens of thousands of people died of starvation in Africa, Asia and Latin America!

How great a difference there is between the humane culture of Islam, which does not let a poor man suffer because of the scent of cooking from a rich neighbour's house which may aggravate his hunger, and the materialistic culture of the West which is

threatening millions of people with death from starvation. How miserable are those who are striving to adopt materiaistic systems, whether Western or Eastern, stumbling blindly in the black night of *jāhiliyyah*. How great is the responsibility of the Muslims to be the bearers of the torch lit from a blessed tree, neither of the East nor of the West, which alone can dispel the darkness of *jāhiliyyah*, illuminate hearts and minds, and restore mankind to guidance, security and prosperity.

The Muslim treats his neighbour in the best way he can

The Muslim who understands the teachings of his religion hastens to treat his neighbour in the best way he can. Nothing is too insignificant when it comes to respecting his neighbour, as some ignorant people think - they may think something is too small to be worth giving as a gift to a neighbour, so they refrain from giving it, thus depriving themselves and their neighbours of much goodness. This is something the Prophet (SAAS) pointed out to women in particular, as many of them may feel too shy to offer a small gift to a neighbour:

> "O Muslim women, do not think that any gift is too insignificant to give to a neighbour, even if it is only a sheep's foot." [Agreed upon]

A sheep's foot is a thing of little value, but it is better than nothing, and no woman should feel that any gift is not worth giving to a neighbour. Allah says:

> **"Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it!"** [*al-Zalzalah* 99:7]

And the Prophet (SAAS) said:

"Save yourself from the Fire even by giving half a date in charity." [al-Bukhārī]

But this *hadīth*, which is general in application, may also be taken to mean that the recipient should not look down on the gift. The meaning then is: No (female) neighbour should scorn the gift given to her by another (female) neighbour, even if it is it is just a sheep's foot. Rather, she should thank her for it, because gratitude engenders friendship among neighbours and encourages mutual support and help. This is in addition to the fact that thanking people for favours is a basic Islamic trait which the Prophet (SAAS) strongly encouraged:

"The one who does not give thanks to people does not give thanks to Allah."[1]

His generosity is directed towards both Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours

The true Muslim does not restrict his good treatment only to neighbours who are related to him or who are Muslims, but he extends it to non-Muslim neighbours too, so that the tolerance of Islam may spread to all people, regardless of their race or religion. The eminent *Ṣaḥābī* 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr had a sheep slaughtered and asked his slave, "Did you give some meat to our Jewish neighbour? For I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say, 'Jibrīl kept on enjoining the good treatment of neighbours to the extent that I thought he would include neighbours as heirs.'" [Agreed upon]

The People of the Book have lived among Muslims for centuries, knowing that they, their honour, their wealth and their beliefs are

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

secure, and enjoying good neighbourly relations, good treatment and freedom of worship. Evidence of this is seen in the continued existence of their ancient churches, clinging to mountaintops, surrounded by thousands of Muslims who uphold the well-being of their Jewish and Christian neighbours in accordance with Qur'ānic teachings:

> **"Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just."** [*al-Mumtahinah* 60:8]

He starts with the neighbour whose home is closest to his own

The true Muslim does not forget the precise system that Islam set out when it enjoined the good treatment of neighbours. Islam has told him to give priority to the one whose house is closest, then the one who is next closest, and so on. This takes into account the closeness of the neighbours whose homes are beside one another, the issues which may frequently arise between them and the importance of maintaining friendship and harmony.

'Ā'ishah (RA) said: "O Messenger of Allah, I have two neighbours, so to which one should I send a gift?" He said, "To the one whose door is closer to yours." [al-Bukhārī]

The *Sahābah* were well-aware of this Islamic teaching regarding the treatment of one's neighbours, so they would not attend to the good treatment of neighbours whose home was further away until they had taken care of the one whose home was nearer. Concerning this, Abū Hurayrah (RA) said: "He does not start with the neighbour whose home is further away before he takes care of the one whose home is nearer. He pays attention to the one whose

home is nearer before he turns his attention to the one whose home is further away."[1]

This system of priority in the good treatment of neighbours does not mean that a Muslim should ignore the neighbours who are further away from his home. Everyone around his home is considered to be a neighbour and thus enjoys the rights of a neighbour. This system is merely a matter of organization, by means of which the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged taking care of the closest neighbour because he is the one with whom there is usually ongoing contact and interaction.

The true Muslim is the best neighbour

The attitude of treating neighbours well is deeply engrained in the Muslim's conscience and is one of the features that most distinguishes him in the sight of Allah and of other people, because the true Muslim who has grown up in or been nurtured by Islam and has internalized its teachings, cannot but be the best of companions and the best of neighbours. He is the one described by the Prophet (SAAS):

> "The best of companions in the sight of Allah is the one who is best to his companion and the best of neighbours in the sight of Allah is the one who is best to his neighbour."[2]

So Islam counts a good neighbour, one whose presence is a source of comfort, security and safety, as one of the joys of a Muslim's life. The Prophet (SAAS) honoured the good neighbour by

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād.*

describing him as one of the pillars of happiness in a Muslim's life:

> "Among the things that bring happiness to a Muslim in this life are a righteous neighbour, a spacious house and a good steed."[1]

The *salaf* appreciated the value of good neighbours so much that they considered having a good neighbour to be a priceless blessing. One story which reflects this tells that the neighbour of Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ wanted to sell his home for 100,000 dirhams, and told the would-be purchaser, "This is the price of the house, but what would you give for having Sa'īd as a neighbour?" When Sa'īd heard about this, he sent his neighbour the price of the house and told him to stay there.

This is the status of neighbours in Islam, and the attitude and behaviour of a good Muslim neighbour. But what about bad neighbours?

Bad neighbours

Having a bad neighbour is something which is so appalling that the sensitive Muslim cannot think of it without shuddering and being filled with a sense of fear, loathing and hatred.

The bad neighbour is a person who is deprived of the blessing of faith

The bad neighbour is a person who is deprived of the blessing of faith, which is the greatest blessing that the Creator has bestowed

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Hākim with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

upon His creation. The Prophet (SAAS) confirmed the bad neighbour's loss of this great blessing in no uncertain terms when he said: "He is not a believer. He is not a believer. He is not a believer." The people asked, "Who, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "The one from whose evil (or troubles) his neighbour does not feel safe." [Agreed upon]

In a report given by Muslim he (SAAS) said:

> "The one from whose evil his neighbour does not feel safe will not enter Paradise."

How great must be the crime of the bad neighbour, if his mistreatment of his neighbour is depriving him of the blessings of faith and denying him entrance to Paradise!

The true Muslim listens to these teachings with an open mind and accepts them. It never occurs to him that one day he may find himself in an argument or conflict with one of his neighbours, because that will destroy his faith and all hope of success in the Hereafter. This would be the greatest loss, and the mere thought of it makes the true Muslim tremble.

The bad neighbour is a person whose good deeds are not accepted

Not surprisingly, several *aḥādīth* state that the bad neighbour is one whose good deeds are not accepted, and will be of no avail so long as he is mistreating his neighbour, because in Islam, good deeds are always centered on a foundation of faith, and as we have seen in the *ḥādīth* quoted above, the bad neighbour has no faith. So obviously his good deeds are not accepted: Allah rejects them outright, no matter how many good deeds he does, even if he spends all day and all night doing them.

The Prophet (SAAS) was asked: "O Messenger of Allah, such-and-such a woman spends her nights in prayer, fasts during the day, and so on, and she gives charity, but she offends her neighbours with her sharp tongue." The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Her good deeds will be of no avail: she is among the people of Hell." They said, "And so-and-so prays only the obligatory prayers, gives charity in the form of left-over curds, but does not offend anyone." The Prophet (SAAS) said: "She is among the people of Paradise."[1]

The bad neighbour is one of the three worst types of people defined by the Prophet (SAAS):

> "There are three worst types of people: a ruler who, if you do well, does not appreciate it and if you do wrong, he does not forgive you for it; a bad neighbour who, if he sees something good, he conceals it, and if he sees something bad he broadcasts it; and a wife who, when you are present, she annoys you and if you go away, she betrays you."[2]

Hence the smart Muslim will have a very clear picture of the bad neighbour, as described by the Prophet (SAAS), and will keep a great distance from such a person.

The true Muslim is careful to avoid falling into sin where his neighbour is concerned

The true Muslim is especially careful to avoid committing sins against his neighbour, because a sin against a neighbour is worse

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by al-Tabarānī; the men of its *isnād* are *thiqāt*.

than other crimes, according to the words of the Prophet (SAAS). He quizzed his Companions about adultery and they said, "It is *ḥarām*; Allah and His Messenger have prohibited it." He told them, "A man who commits adultery with ten women has committed a lesser sin than one who commits adultery with his neighbour's wife." Then he quizzed them about stealing, and they said, "It is *ḥarām*; Allah and His Messenger have prohibited it." He told them, "A man who steals from ten households has committed a lesser sin than the one who steals from his neighbour's house."[1]

The neighbour in Islam enjoys a unique sanctity which is unknown in other manmade laws and systems. Those manmade laws encourage the violation of a neighbour's honour because it is usually easier and there are more opportunities to do so than to violate the honour of others. These promiscuous songs about looking through the neighbour's window and such like did not become widespread in the Muslim world until we had forgotten the manners of chivalry and faith, and been overwhelmed by blind imitation and cultural and intellectual imperialism. Then cheap, dirty young men among us began to compose songs and poems about the female neighbour, when such a thing had never been known during our *jāhiliyyah*, let alone after the advent of Islam. One of our noble and decent poets, if he happened to see a female neighbour, would say:

> "I lower my gaze when my female neighbour appears before me,/
> until she disappears into her own home."[2]

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[1]Reported by Imam Ahmad in *al-Musnad*. Its men are *thiqāt*.

[2]'Antarah, in his *Dīwān* with footnotes by al-Mawlawī, p. 308.

Islam has encouraged this noble human attitude and behaviour in the many texts concerning the good treatment of one's neighbour, protecting his honour, concealing his faults, helping him when he is in need, lowering one's gaze from his womenfolk, and keeping away from everything that may harm him or make him suspicious. It is no surprise, then, that the true Muslim is the best neighbour that any human society has ever known.

The Muslim who is truly sensitive and aware of the teachings of his religion conerning the good treatment of neighbours, will be very cautious indeed concerning any dispute that may arise between himself and his neighbour for any reason, because of the warning of the Prophet (SAAS) against arguing with neighbours:

> "The first two antagonists on the Day of Judgement will be two neighbours."[1]

His good treatment of his neighbour is not lacking

The true Muslim does not spare any effort to help his neighbour, opening wide the door of care, friendship and generosity. He is careful to fulfil his duty towards him lest the words of the Prophet (SAAS) concerning the miserly, unhelpful neighbour become applicable to him:

> "How many people will be hanging on to their neighbours on the Day of Resurrection, saying: 'O my Lord! He shut his door in my face and denied me his kind treatment and help!'"[2]

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī, with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

What a miserable position the miserly, uncaring neighbour will be in on the Day of Judgement!

According to Islam, the Muslims are like a wall, whose bricks are the people of the *ummah*. Each brick must be sound, and strongly bonded with the others, to make this wall sturdy and enduring; otherwise it will become weak and prone to collapse. Thus Islam surrounds this wall with strong spiritual ties, to preserve its integrity and strength, so that it will not be shaken no matter what events befall it.

The Prophet (SAAS) gave a marvellous metaphor of the Muslims' solidarity and mutual support:

> "The believers are like a wall whose bricks are fitted tightly together; each one of them supports another." [al-Bukhārī]

> "The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body: if any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in pain." [al-Bukhārī]

If a religion places such an amazing emphasis on the solidarity of its followers, it is natural that it should strengthen neighbourly ties and base them on a solid foundation of friendship, kindness, mutual support and good treatment.

He puts up with his neighbour's mistakes and bad treatment

The Muslim who is guided by Islam is patient with his neighbour and does not get angry or bear a grudge if he makes a mistake or has some shortcomings. He is tolerant and forgiving towards him, thus hoping to earn reward from Allah and to attain His love and

pleasure. This is proven by the *hadīth* of Abū Dharr: when Muṭarrif ibn 'Abdullah met him, he said, "O Abū Dharr, I heard about what you said and I wanted to meet you." Abū Dharr said, "Your father was a great man! Now you have met me." Mutarrif said: "I heard that you have said that the Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Allah loves three and hates three.'" Abū Dharr said, "I do not think that I will tell lies about the Messenger of Allah." Muṭarrif said, "Then who are the three whom Allah loves?" Abū Dharr (quoting the Prophet (SAAS)) said: "A man who fights for the sake of Allah, with perseverance and hoping for reward from Him, and fights until he is killed, and you find this in the Book of Allah." Then he recited: **"Truly Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure."** [*al-Saff* 61:4] Muṭarrif asked: "Then who?" He said, "A man who has a bad neighbour who annoys and disturbs him, but he bears it with patience and forbearance until Allah ends the matter either during his lifetime or upon the death of either of them."[1]

He does not give tit-for-tat

One element of the teachings of this religion which the Prophet (SAAS) explained to his Companions is not to repay a bad neighbour with bad deeds, but to bear his disturbance with patience, in so far as he is able, hoping that the one who is doing wrong may stop his bad behaviour when he sees that his neighbour is not responding in kind. This is one of the noblest characteristics and one of the most effective ways of uprooting the evil that exists in some souls.

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Ṭabarānī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn Sallām (RA) came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said, "My neighbour is disturbing me." He said, "Have patience." He came back a second time and said, "My neighbour is disturbing me," And the Prophet (SAAS) again told him, "Have patience." He came back a third time and said, "My neighbour is disturbing me." The Prophet (SAAS) told him: "Go back and put all your goods and chattels out in the street. If anyone comes along and asks you, tell him, 'My neighbour is disturbing me.' Then he will truly incur curses. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his neighbour...'"[1]

He knows his neighbour's rights over him

From the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) regarding neighbours, the true Muslim knows the rights of his neighbour over him at all times. So he helps him at times of difficulty; he shares his joys and his sorrows; if he becomes poor he treats him kindly and helps him; if he is ill he visits him and consoles him; if he dies he follows his bier, comforts his family and takes care of them. He never forgets to consider the feelings of his neighbour and his family, and avoids doing anything that may hurt their feelings whether directly or indirectly.

These are the sublime Islamic teachings concerning neighbours for every Muslim who has been guided to true Islam and who applies its rules to himself and to his family. Is it any wonder, in the light of all this, that the true Muslim should be the best neighbour that any human society has ever known?

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[1] *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/50.

CHAPTER 8

THE MUSLIM AND HIS FRIENDS AND BROTHERS IN ISLAM

He loves them for the sake of Allah

One of the most prominent distinguishing features of the true Muslim is his love for his friends and brothers in faith, a love that is untainted by any worldly interests or ulterior motives. This is true brotherly love, whose purity is derived from the light of Islamic guidance; its effect on the behaviour of Muslims is quite unique in the history of human relationships.

The bond that links a Muslim to his brother, regardless of race, colour or language, is the bond of faith in Allah:

> **"The Believers are but a single brotherhood . . ."**
> [*al-Hujurāt* 49:10]

The brotherhood of faith is the strongest of bonds between hearts and minds. It comes as no surprise that this unique brotherhood bears fruits of love that are amazingly sublime, pure, deep and lasting. Islam calls it "love for the sake of Allah," in which the true Muslim finds the sweetness of faith:

> "There are three things that whoever attains them will find the sweetness of faith: if Allah and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone else; if

he loves a person solely for the sake of Allah; and if he would hate to return to *kufr* after Allah has rescued him from it, as much as he would hate to be thrown into the Fire." [Agreed upon]

The status of two who love one another for the sake of Allah

Many *aḥādīth* describe the status of two people who love one another for the sake of Allah, and describe the high position in Paradise which He has promised them and the great honour which He will bestow upon them on the Day when mankind is resurrected to meet the Lord of the Worlds: Among them is the *ḥadīth* which describes the seven whom Allah will shade on the Day when there is no shade but His:

> ". . . a just leader; a youth who grows up worshipping Allah; a man who is deeply attached to the mosque; two men who love one another for the sake of Allah, meeting for His sake and parting for His sake; a man who is called by a beautiful woman and says, 'I fear Allah'; a man who gives charity in secret such that his left hand does not know what his right hand is doing; and a man who remembers Allah when he is alone and his eyes fill with tears." [Agreed upon]

The two who love one another for the sake of Allah are clearly shown to be among those whom Allah will shelter with His shade and upon whom He will shower His mercy and kindness. What a great honour! It is enough honour for those who love one another for the sake of Allah that their almighty Lord will greet them on the Day of Resurrection and say to them: "Where are those who loved one another for My glory? Today I will shade them in My shade on the Day when there is no shade but Mine." [Muslim]

Such is the magnificent honour and tremendous reward that will be bestowed upon those who truly loved one another for the sake of Allah, on that awesome Day.

Love for the sake of Allah, and not for the sake of anything else in this life which is filled with greed, desires and interests, is very difficult, and none can attain it except the one who is pure of heart, for whom this world is as nothing compared to the pleasure of Allah. It is not surprising that Allah should give them a status and blessing which is commensurate with their position in this world, above whose concerns they have risen. We find proof of this in the *ḥadīth* of Mu'ādh who said that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Allah said: 'Those who love one another for My glory, will have *minbars* of light, and the Prophets and martyrs will wish that they had the same.'"[1]

Allah gives to those who love one another for His sake a gift which is even greater than this status and blessing: that is His precious love which is very difficult to attain. This is proven by the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayrah (RA) in which the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "A man went to visit a brother of his in another village. Allah sent an angel to wait for him on the road. When the man came long, the angel asked him, 'Where do you intend to go?' He said, 'I am going to visit a brother of mine who lives in this village.' The angel asked, 'Have you done him any favour (for which you are now seeking

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

> repayment)?' He said, 'No. I just love him for the sake of Allah.' The angel told him, 'I am a messenger to you from Allah, sent to tell you that He loves you as you love your brother for His sake.'" [Muslim]

What a great love, that raises a man to a position where Allah loves him and is pleased with him!

The teaching of the Prophet (SAAS) goes even further and states that the better of two brothers who love one another for the sake of Allah is the one who loves his brother more. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No two men love one another, but the better of them is the one whose love for his brother is greater."[1]

Islam goes even further in spreading love in the rightly-guided Muslim society by telling the Muslim that if he loves his brother, he should tell him. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "If a man loves his brother, let him tell him that he loves him"[2]

The Prophet (SAAS) understood the impact of this strong, pure love in building societies and nations, so he never let any occasion pass without advocating this love and commanding the Muslims

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by Abu Dāwud and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

to announce their love for one another, in order to open hearts and spread love and purity among the ranks of the Ummah.

Anas (RA) said that a man was with the Prophet (SAAS), when another man passed by. The first man said, "O Messenger of Allah, indeed I truly love this man." The Prophet (SAAS) asked him, "Have you let him know that?" He said, "No." The Prophet (SAAS) said, "Tell him." He caught up with him and told him, "Truly I love you for the sake of Allah," and the man said, "May Allah love you who loves me for His sake."[1]

Mu'ādh began to spread this pure love among the Muslims throughout the Muslim lands, telling them what he had heard from the Prophet (SAAS) about the great reward that Allah had prepared for those who loved one another for His sake, and about His great love for them. In *al-Muwatta'*, Imām Mālik gives a report with a *sahīh isnād* from Abu Idrīs al-Khūlānī who said: "I entered the mosque of Damascus, where I saw a young man who had a bright smile, and I saw the people gathered around him. When they disagreed on some matter, they referred it to him, and accepted his opinion. I asked who he was, and they told me, 'This is Mu'ādh ibn Jabal (RA).' Early the next day, I went to the mosque but I found that he had arrived even earlier than I. He was praying, so I waited until he had finished, then I approached him from in front, greeted him and said, 'By Allah I love you.' He said, 'For the sake of Allah?' I said, 'For the sake of Allah.' He repeated his question, 'For the sake of Allah?' and I said, 'For the sake of Allah.' So he took hold of my collar and pulled towards him and said, 'I have good news for you. I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: "Allah Almighty says: 'My love is granted to those

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd, with a *sahīh isnād*.

who love one another for My sake, who visit one another for My sake, and who spend on one another for My sake.'"'"

The effect of love for the sake of Allah on the life of Muslims

In another *hadīth*, the Prophet (SAAS) confirmed that this love between believers is one of the conditions of faith that will grant entrance to Paradise to the one who has it. In a report given by Imām Muslim from Abū Hurayrah, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you of something that if you do it, you will love one another? Spread *salām* amongst yourselves." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS), with the brilliant educational insight bestowed upon him by Allah, understood that nothing could eliminate hatred, jealousy and rivalry from people's hearts but true brotherhood, based on love, friendship and mutual advice, and free of conspiracies, envy, sullenness and hatred. So he called for the Muslims to spread *salām* among their brothers, so that it would open their hearts to love and meeting one another on a good basis.

He frequently repeated this teaching to his *Sahābah*, hoping to sow the seed of love in their hearts and nurture it until it bore fruits of that great love that Islam wants for the Muslims. With this great love, the Prophet (SAAS) built the first generation of Muslims which conveyed this divine Message to the world and formed the solid basis on which this religion was built.

Without this pure love, which Islam alone instilled in their hearts, the first Muslims would not have been able to persevere in *jihād*

and make the great sacrifices through which they built the Islamic state and spread the rule of Islam throughout the world.

With this amazing true love, the Prophet (SAAS) was able to establish the most ideal society of believers ever known, whose solidarity he described so well:

> "The relationship between believers is like a wall, parts of which support other parts." [Muslim]
>
> "The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body. If any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in pain." [Muslim]
>
> "The Muslims are like one person: if his eye hurts him then his whole body will suffer, and if his head hurts him then his whole body will suffer." [Muslim]

In the light of this guidance, the Muslim cannot but be filled with love for his brothers and friends. Thus he becomes a good, constructive element of love in this world, and a victor who has gained the pleasure and love of his Lord in the Hereafter.

He does not forsake or abandon his brother

The true Muslim who understand the teachings of Islam knows that the religion that calls for love, continued contact and mutual affection, also is the religion that has forbidden brothers in faith to hate or abandon one another. Islam has explained that two people who truly love one another for the sake of Allah will not be separated by the first minor offence that either of them may commit, because the bond of love for the sake of Allah is too

strong to be broken by such minor matters. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No two people who love one another for the sake of Allah, or for the sake of Islam, will let the first minor offence of either of them come between them."[1]

Islam does not ignore human nature; it recognizes that anger may strike in moments of weakness, but it puts a limit on the length of time that anger may prevail, and forbids Muslims to continue a dispute beyond this time without one or both of them bringing about a reconciliation. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "It is not permissible for a Muslim to be estranged from his brother for more than three days, both of them turning away from one another when they meet. The better of them is the one who is first to greet the other." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The true Muslim who has studied these definitive *aḥādīth* will not be able to bear having a dispute with his brother and being estranged from him, no matter what the reason. Rather, he will hasten to bring about a reconciliation, because the better of the two is the one who is first to give *salām*. If the other returns the greeting, both of them will have a share of the reward for the reconciliation, and if he does not return it, then the one who gave the greeting will be absolved of the sin of forsaking his brother while the one who refused to return the *salām* will have to bear the burden of that sin alone. This is made clear by the *ḥadīth* in which Abū Hurayrah said:

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

> "I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'It is not permissible for a man to be estranged from a believer for more than three days. If three days have passed, then he should go and give *salām* to him; if he returns the *salām* then both of them will have a share in the reward, and if he does not respond then the one who gave *salām* will be absolved of the sin of estrangement."[1]

The longer the estrangement lasts, the greater is the sin and the more severe is the punishment that will befall the two who are split by the dispute. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever is estranged from his brother for a year, it is as if he has shed his blood."[2]

The Islamic system of education is based on mutual love and affection, and ongoing contact. Therefore mutual hatred and envy should have no place in the life of the true Muslim. How could he allow such bad characteristics when he knows the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) which enjoin morals and manners the like of which have never been known since man first walked on the face of the earth? The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "There should be no breaking off of ties, no turning away from one another, no hating one another, and no envying one another. Be brothers, as Allah has commanded you." [Muslim]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

> "Beware of suspicion, for speaking on the basis of suspicion is the worst kind of lie. Do not seek out one another's faults, do not spy on one another, do not compete with one another, do not envy one another, do not hate one another, and do not turn away from one another. O servants of Allah, be brothers." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

> "Do not envy one another, do not outbid one another (in order to inflate prices), do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another, and do not enter into a transaction when others have already entered into it. O servants of Allah, be brothers. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He does not oppress him, humiliate him or look down upon him. *Taqwā* is here" - and so saying, he pointed to his chest three times - "It is evil enough for a man to look down upon his Muslim brother. The whole of a Muslim's being is sacred to another Muslim - his blood, his wealth and his honour are inviolable." [Muslim]

The Muslim who thinks deeply about this teaching of the Prophet (SAAS) which is filled with love, affection and brotherhood, will not be able to persist in his hatred unless there is some disease in his heart or some twistedness in his nature.

Therefore Islam issues a stern warning to those hard-hearted people who are deviating from true Islam and denying its spirit of tolerance by insisting on remaining estranged. They are risking an awful fate in the Hereafter: their actions may prevent them from attaining the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, and may close the doors of Paradise to them. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The doors of Paradise are opened on Monday and Thursday, and every servant who does not associate anything with Allah will be forgiven, except for the man who bears a grudge against his brother. It will be said, 'Wait for these two until they reconcile, wait for these two until they reconcile, wait for these two until they reconcile." [Muslim]

The great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū'l-Dardā' used to say: "Shall I not tell you about something that is better for you than charity and fasting? Reconcile between your brothers, for hatred diminishes reward."[1]

This is deep and penetrating insight, on the part of this *Ṣaḥābī* whose intelligence and good sense the Prophet (SAAS) used to trust, into the spirit of this religion which is based on brotherhood and love. He understood that hatred cancels out good deeds and destroys rewards, so reconciling the estranged Muslim with his brother is better for him than charity and fasting, because if he were to continue bearing a grudge against his brother, this would negate any reward he might receive for those acts of worship.

He is tolerant and forgiving towards them

If he becomes angry with his brother, the true Muslim restrains his anger and is quick to forgive him, and does not see any shame in doing so. Rather, he sees it as a good deed which will bring him closer to Allah and earn him His love which He bestows only on those who do good:

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

"... [those] who restrain anger and pardon (all) men - for Allah loves those who do good."
[*Āl 'Imrān* 3:134]

A man may be able to restrain his anger, but resentment may be smouldering in his heart, and may turn into deep-rooted hatred. Open anger and rage are healthier than hidden resentment and malice.

The true Muslim whose soul has been saturated with this religion, does not harbour grudges; if he restrains his anger, he then follows that with forgiveness, and thus he will be among those who do good.

Anger is very difficult to restrain, for it is a heavy burden on the heart. But when a person forgives another, this heavy burden is lifted, freeing him, soothing him and bringing peace of mind. These are the feelings of *iḥsān* (goodness) which the Muslim feels when he forgives his brother.

The true Muslim is forgiving towards his brother, purely for the sake of Allah. He hopes thereby to earn the honour to which the Prophet (SAAS) referred in the *ḥadīth*:

> "Allah will not increase His servant except in honour. No-one humbles himself for the sake of Allah, but Allah will raise his status." [Muslim]

It is a great honour from Allah, which combines with the good characteristics of the tolerant, forgiving Muslim, so that he becomes one of those who do good whom Allah loves, and one of those honored ones whom people love.

Resentment has no place in the heart of the sensitive Muslim who truly understands his religion. He realizes the value of forgiveness and purity of heart, and their importance if he seeks Allah's forgiveness, as the Prophet (SAAS) explained:

> "There are three sins, whoever dies free of these sins will be forgiven for anything else if Allah wills: associating anything with Allah; practising magic or witchcraft; and bearing resentment towards his brother."[1]

He meets them with a smiling face

The Muslim should always be pure of heart and cheerful of countenance. He should not meet his brothers except with warmth and smiles, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Do not think little of any good deed even if it is just greeting your brother with a cheerful countenance." [Muslim]

Having a cheerful and friendly face is a good characteristic which Islam encourages and considers to be a good deed which will bring reward, because a cheerful face mirrors a pure soul. This inward and outward purity is one of the distinguishing features of the sincere Muslim. Hence the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Your smiling at your brother is an act of charity (*ṣadaqah*)."[2]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī who said it is *ḥasan gharīb*.

'Ali (RA) said: "When two Muslims meet and converse, Allah will forgive the one who has the most cheerful face."

It was the habit of the *Sahābah*, who were the living example of Islam, to shake hands whenever they met, and whenever they returned from a journey they would embrace one another. These actions increase the feelings of love and friendship between the two who meet. Ibn Sa'd reports in *al-Ṭabaqāt* (4/34) that al-Sha'bī said:

> "When the Prophet (SAAS) returned from Khaybar, Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA) came out to meet him, and the Prophet (SAAS) embraced him and kissed his forehead, and said, 'I do not know which gives me more joy, Ja'far's return (from Abyssinia) or the conquest of Khaybar.'" Another report adds: "he embraced him warmly."

Islam encourages giving *salām*, and shaking hands and embracing whenever brothers meet, so as to reinforce the ties of love and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood among believers, so that the Muslim society will be able to fulfil its purpose in life.

He is sincere towards them

The true Muslim is sincere towards Allah, His Book, His Prophet and to the leaders and the masses of the Muslims, as is stated in the *hadīth*:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Religion is sincerity[1].' We asked, 'To whom?' He said, 'To Allah (by obeying Him, attributing to Him what He deserves and performing *jihād* for His sake); to His Book (by reading it, understanding it and applying it to one's daily life); to His Prophet (by respecting him greatly and fighting on his behalf both in his lifetime and after his death, and by following his *sunnah*); to the rulers of the Muslims (by helping them in their task of leading Muslims to the right path and alerting them if they are heedless);. and to their common folk (by being merciful towards them)." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim][2]

It is no surprise, then, that the Muslim should be sincere towards his brothers and not cheat them or mislead them. Sincerity, in this sense, is one of the most basic principles of Islam, which the first believers pledged to adhere to when they gave allegiance (*bay'ah*) to the Prophet (SAAS). This is confirmed by the statement of Jarīr ibn 'Abdullah (RA):

> "I gave allegiance to the Prophet (SAAS) and pledged to observe regular prayer, to pay *zakāt* and to be sincere towards every Muslim."
> [Agreed upon]

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[1]*Naṣīḥah* is an Arabic word that may be translated by a number of words in English. The most common translation is "good advice," but it also carries connotations of sincerity, integrity and "doing justice to a person or situation." [Translator]

[2]The explanations in brackets are adapted from those given in the English translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* by Dr. Muhammad Mushin Khan (Vol. 1, p. 48). [Translator]

In the *ḥadīth* quoted above, we see that the Prophet (SAAS) summed up Islam in one word, *naṣīḥah*, showing that sincerity is the central foundation of the faith. For without sincerity, a man's faith is invalid and his Islam is worthless. This is the meaning of the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." [Agreed upon]

This is impossible to achieve unless one loves one's brother with all sincerity. No doubt this level of love for one's brother is very difficult to attain, but it is not impossible as long as one is constantly aware that liking for one's brother what one likes for oneself is one of the conditions of faith, and that religion is sincerity. Indeed, it is a natural attitude of the sincere Muslim who truly understands Islam. Our history is filled with many examples, ancient and modern, of how true Muslims liked for their brothers what they liked for themselves. This reminds me of the stories I have heard from my elders about the traders in the markets of Syria. In the old covered *souqs*, traders dealing in one commodity would be grouped together, so there would be a *souq* for sellers of perfumes, another for dyers, a third for tailors, and so on. When a buyer came to one of them first and bought something, if a second buyer came - and his neighbour had not yet made a sale - he would politely tell the customer, "Go and buy from my neighbour, for I have made a sale, but he has not yet sold anything."

O Allah! How joyous and delightful life appears in the shade of this brotherhood and mutual affection! How happy life would be if it were infused with the spirit of Islam and if Islamic values pervaded all its interactions. Then we would be living in a higher status that no man can achieve except in this religion which teaches him that "religion is sincerity" and that he does not truly

believe until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself. On the basis of these lofty principles of love and sincerity, the great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Hurayrah used to say:

> "The believer is the mirror of his brother. If he sees any fault in him he corrects it."[1]

In these words, Abū Hurayrah was echoing the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "The believer is the mirror of his brother. The believer is the brother of a believer: he protects him from ruin and guards his back."[2]

It is natural that the true Muslim should have this noble attitude towards his brother. He could not do otherwise, even if he wanted to; the person who is living on such an exalted level cannot come down to the level of individualism and selfishness. A vessel will leak whatever is in it; a flower cannot but smell sweet, and good land cannot but bring forth good produce. The poet rightly said:

> "Does any plant produce large flowers but the *washīj* (plant with spear-like leaves)?/
> Are palm trees planted anywhere except in the soil which is suitable for them?"

He has a natural inclination towards kindness and faithfulness.

Islam instills in its followers the characteristics of kindness and faithfulness towards one's friends: it even includes the parents'

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*

friends as we have already seen in chapter 3 ("The Muslim and his parents"). Thus the true Muslim appreciates the value of faithfulness, and the value of the ties of brotherhood and friendship. The books of our Islamic heritage are filled with great examples of kindness and faithfulness, which the *salaf* embodied in their daily lives so that they truly were **"the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind."**

An example of this is the *hadīth* narrated by Muslim in his *Sahīh* from Ibn 'Umar (RA), in which the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend."

'Abdullah ibn Dīnār reported that he and 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (RA) met a Bedouin man on the road to Makkah. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar greeted him, seated him on the donkey he was riding and gave him the turban he was wearing. Ibn Dīnār said: "We said to him, 'May Allah guide you! He is only a Bedouin and the least thing would satisfy them!' 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar said, 'This man's father was a friend of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, and I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: "The best kind of goodness (*birr*) is that a man should keep in touch with and respect his father's friend."'"

The Prophet (SAAS) used to nurture the souls of the Muslims and plant the seeds of faithfulness in them whenever he found an opportunity to tell them something of his guidance. A man of Banū Salamah came to him and asked: "O Messenger of Allah, is there any deed of kindness and respect that I can do for my parents after they die?" He said, "Yes, pray for them, ask forgiveness for them, fulfil their promises after they die, keep in contact with your

relatives - for you have no relatives except through them - and respect their friends."[1]

The Prophet's concern for this kind of faithfulness in friendship was something that used to upset 'Ā'ishah (RA), because he used to extend it to the friends of Khadījah, and 'Ā'ishah used to feel jealous of her. This is clear from the words of 'Ā'ishah:

> "I never felt jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (SAAS) as I did of Khadījah (RA), although I had never seen her. But he used to mention her frequently, and sometimes he would slaughter a sheep, butcher the meat, and send it to Khadījah's friends. One time I said to him, 'It is as if there were no other woman in the world but Khadijah!' He said, 'She was such-and-such, and I had children by her.'" [Agreed upon] According to another report: "he used to slaughter a sheep and send to her friends a goodly amount of it."

This incomparable Islamic faithfulness extends even to the distant friends of deceased parents and wives! So what about our own close friends who are still alive?

One of the requirements of love, sincerity, kindness and faithfulness, according to Islam, is that a man should help his brother in all circumstances. If he is in the right, then he should help him by supporting him, standing by him, and defending him; if he is in the wrong, then he should help him by rebuking him, advising him and saving him from sinking into the mire of

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Hibbān in his *Sahīh*.

wrongdoing. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) advocated in the *ḥadīth*:

> "A man should help his brother whether he is a wrong-doer or is wronged. If he is a wrongdoer then he should stop him, and if he is wronged, then he should defend him." [Muslim]

The true Muslim does not forsake his brother, whether he is a wrongdoer or is wronged. Islam teaches him to like for his brother what he likes for himself: as long as he would not like for himself to be a wrongdoer or to do wrong, then he would not like this for his brother either. So if his brother is wronged, he stands by him, supports him and defends him, and if he is a wrongdoer he stands by him and stops him from doing wrong. This is indeed true sincerity and true kindness. These are two qualities that distinguish the true Muslim at any time and in any place.

He is kind to his brothers

The true Muslim who is adhering to the teachings and values of his religion is kind to his brothers and is good-natured and easy-going towards them. In this, he is following the guidance of Islam, which encourages good characteristics.

Allah describes the believers as being **". . .lowly [or humble] with the believers, mighty against the *kāfirūn*. . ."** [*al-Mā'idah* 5:54]. This suggests gentleness, modesty and good dealings with one's brothers in faith to an infinite degree of kindness, which is most akin to humility.

This message is reinforced by the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS), which encourage the Muslim to be kind in a way that will add beauty to life. This is seen in the *ḥadīth*:

"There is no kindness in a thing but it adds beauty to it, and there is no absence of kindness but it disfigures a thing." [Muslim]

The Muslim sees a clear picture of the Prophet's character in his *sīrah*, which is full of kindness, gentleness, honour and good manners. He was never known to use obscene language or to curse or insult a Muslim. Anas (RA), his servant and constant companion, describes his noble character thus:

"The Prophet (SAAS) never used obscene language, or uttered curses and insults. If he wanted to rebuke someone, he would say, 'What is the matter with him, may his forehead be covered with dust![1]'" [al-Bukhārī]

He does not gossip about them

The true Muslim does not gossip or backbite about his brothers and friends, or backbite against them. He knows that gossip is *ḥarām*, as the Qur'ān says:

". . . Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it. But fear Allah: for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful." [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:12]

The true Muslim who is infused with Islamic teachings and manners will be horrified by the depiction given in the Qur'ān of one who gossips as being like one who eats the flesh of his dead

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[1]It has been suggested that what is meant by this expression is "may his *sujūd* (prostration) increase," thus he would be guided and corrected. [Author]

brother. This will deter him from gossiping and, if he is guilty of this sin, he will hasten to repent sincerely, as indicated at the end of the *āyah* quoted. He will then restrain his tongue and speak only good of his brother, remembering the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Do you know what gossip is? They said, "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "It is your saying about your brother something which he dislikes." He was asked, "What do you think if what I say about my brother is true? He said, "If it is true then you have gossiped about him, and if it is not true then you have slandered him." [Muslim]

The true Muslim avoids the sin of gossiping directly or indirectly, abhorring the idea of being one who eats the flesh of his dead brother and fearing lest his tongue lead him to Hell. This is made clear by the Prophet's warning to Mu'ādh, when he took hold of his tongue and said, "Restrain this." Mu'ādh said, "O Prophet of Allah, will we be responsible for what we say?" The Prophet (SAAS) said, "May your mother be bereft of you! Is there anything that causes people to be thrown in Hell on their faces (or he said: on their noses) but the harvest of their tongues?"[1]

Gossip is a bad characteristic which does not befit a real man. Rather it is a feature of two-faced cowards who look like men, those who gossip to people about their brothers and friends, then when they meet them they smile warmly and make a display of friendship. Hence the true Muslim should be the furthest removed from gossip and fickleness, because Islam has taught him to be a real man, to be straightforward and to fear Allah in all his words

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhi, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

and deeds. It has made him thoroughly despise hypocrisy and fickleness. The two-faced person is regarded as being one of the worst people in the sight of Allah, as the Prophet (SAAS) says:

> "You will find among the worst people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection, the one who is two-faced, who approaches some people in one way and others in another."
> [al-Bukhārī, Muslim, *et al.*]

The true Muslim is straightforward, never two-faced. He meets all people with a friendly, smiling face and does not differentiate between people in the face he presents to them. For he knows that being two-faced is the essence of hypocrisy and that hypocrisy and Islam do not go together. The two-faced person is a hypocrite, and the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell.

He avoids arguing with them, making hurtful jokes and breaking promises

Among the good manners of the true Muslim are: he does not exhaust his brothers and friends with futile arguments, he does not annoy them with hurtful jokes, and he does not break a promise that he has made to them. In this way, he follows the guidance of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Do not argue with your brother, do not joke excessively with him, do not make a promise to him then break it."[1]

[1] Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

This is because arguing does not bring any benefits; hurtful jokes often lead to hatred and loss of respect; and breaking promises upsets people and destroys love. The true Muslim should be above all of that.

He is generous and prefers his brothers over himself

The true Muslim is generous, and spends freely on his brothers and friends. Naturally his brothers and friends should all be righteous believers, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Do not take for a friend anyone but a believer, and do not let anyone but a righteous person eat your food."[1]

The true Muslim understands where and when to be generous, and why. He does not waste his money or spend it on anyone but his righteous, believing brothers. He does not let himself become a milch-cow for worthless renegades as a means to protect himself from them or to earn their favour if they are in power. Those are people who do not hesitate to take advantage of simple-hearted, generous religious folk; you may see them eating at their tables whilst inwardly laughing at this simple-hearted, misplaced generosity.

The true Muslim is generous, but only when it is appropriate to be so. Generosity is a basic Islamic characteristic that elevates the one who possesses it and endears him to people. This virtue was deeply rooted in the *Ṣaḥābah* (RA), and was one of the dearest of righteous deeds to them. This is seen in the statement of 'Ali (RA):

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī with a *ḥasan isnād*.

> "Having a small group of my brothers come and eat a little food with me is dearer to me than going out into your market to buy a slave and set him free."[1]

This kind of friendly gathering to share food strengthens the love between brothers and reinforces the spirit of human affection between friends. This is something which has been lost by modern, materialistic cultures, whose people now are concerned only for themselves and their own interests, and hence are suffereing from a sense of spiritual emptiness and emotional dryness. The result is a deep feeling of being deprived of sincere friendship and true friends. These people devote themselves to caring for their dogs, to make up for the lack of human emotional warmth drained from them by the materialistic philosophy which they have taken as a religion governing all apects of life. A French report states that there are seven million dogs in France, a country whose population is fifty two million. These dogs live with their owners like one of the family. It is no longer strange in French restaurants to see a dog and its owner eating together at the same table. When an official of the animal welfare organization in Paris was asked, "Why do the French treat their dogs like they treat themselves?" he answered, "because they want someone to love, but they cannot find any person to love."[2]

The materialistic man, whether in the West or in the East, can no longer find a true, sincere friend in his own society on whom to bestow his love and affection. So he turns to these animals in

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Prof. Wahī d al-Dīn Khān, *Wujub tatbī q al-sharī'ah al-islāmiyyah fi kulli zamān wa makān* ("The necessity of applying Islamic *sharī 'ah* in every time and place"), in *al-Mujtama'*, No. 325, Kuwait, 24 Dhu'l-Qi'dah 1396/16 November 1976.

whom he finds more gentleness and faithfulness than in the people around him. Can man become any more emotionally degenerate than this extreme love for animals when he has lost the blessing of faith and guidance?

This emotional degeneration from which Westerners are suffering and which has dried up the human feelings in their souls, is one of the first things that attracted the attention of emigrant Arab writers, both Muslim and non-Muslim. They noticed that the materialistic lifestyle which has overtaken western societies has made men into machines who know nothing in life but work, productivity and fierce competition, who do not know what it is to smile warmly at a friend. They are overwhelmed by the haste and crowds of this machine-like existence. Seeing all of this alarmed those Arab writers, who had grown up in the Islamic world and breathed its spirit of tolerance, and whose hearts were filled with brotherly love. So they began earnestly calling the Westerners towards the values of love and brotherhood. One of them was Nasīb ʿArīḍah, who raised the banner of this humane call to the Westerner whose heart was stained with materialism and who had been blinded and deafened by the roar of the machines:

> "O my friend, O my companion, O my colleague, my love for you is not out of curiosity or a desire to impose on you./ Answer me with the words 'O my brother!' O my friend, and repeat it, for these are the sweetest words./ If you wish to walk alone, or if you grow bored of me, / then go ahead, but you will hear my voice, calling 'O my brother,' bearing the message,/ and the echo of my love will reach you wherever you are, so you will understand its beauty and its glory."

The burden of materialistic life in the West became too much for Yūsuf As'ad Ghānim to bear, and he could no longer stand this life which was full of problems and sinking in the ocean of materialism, and was devoid of the fresh air of spirituality, brotherhood and affection. So he began to long for the Arab countries of the Islamic world, the lands of Prophethood and spirituality, the home of love, brotherhood and purity. He wished that he could live in an Arab tent, and leave behind the civilized world with all its noise and glaring lights:

> "If I were to live a short life in any Arab land, I would thank Allah for a short but rich life in a world where He is loved in the hearts of its people. I got so tired of the West that tiredness itself got bored of me. Take your cars and planes, and give me a camel and a horse. Take the Western world, land, sea and sky, and give me an Arab tent which I will pitch on one of the mountains of my homeland Lebanon, or on the banks of Bārādā or the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates, in the suburbs of 'Ammān, in the deserts of Saudi Arabia, in the unknown regions of Yemen, on the slopes of the Pyramids, in the oases of Libya... Give me an Arab tent, and I will weigh it against the entire world and emerge a winner..."

Many writings by emigrant Arab authors share the same tone, but it is sufficient to give just a few examples here. All of their writings express the emigrants' longing for the emotional richness that they missed when they came to the West, an experience which awoke in them feelings of longing for the East where Islam had spread love, brotherhood, mutual affection and solidarity.

Islam encourages its followers to meet their brothers and compete in generosity that will strengthen the ties of brotherhood among them, because generosity to one's brothers is viewed as a basic characteristic that is required of the Muslim. Islam made accepting a Muslim brother's invitation a duty in which he must not fail. The *Ṣaḥābah* (RA) used to accept their brother's invitations, because they saw this as their brother's right and their own duty; failing to do so would be a sin. This is seen in the *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* from Ziyād ibn An'am al-Ifrīqī, who said:

> "We were waging a campaign by sea at the time of Mu'awiya (RA). Our ship came alongside the ship of Abu Ayyūb al-Anṣārī (RA). When it was time for lunch, we sent for him and he came to us and said, 'You called me while I was fasting, and I had no choice but to answer you, because I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: "The Muslim has six duties towards his brother: he should greet him with *salām* when he meets him; accept his invitation; bless him[1] when he sneezes; visit him when he is sick; attend his funeral when he dies; and give him advice when he asks for it."'"

Indeed, the *Ṣaḥābah* thought that if a Muslim rejected his brother's invitation for no good reason, he was committing a sin against Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The worst of food is a meal which is cooked for guests, to which those who would come are not

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[1]By saying "*yarḥamuk Allah*" (may Allah have mercy on you). [Translator]

invited, whilst those who would reject it are. Whoever rejects an invitation with no good reason has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger." [Muslim]

The brotherhood of faith is not just the matter of empty slogans to be shouted. It is a sacred bond that has its own commitments, duties and rights. The one who truly believes in Allah and the Last Day, and who follows Islam, knows this, and does his best to fulfil the duties of Islam. We see evidence of that faith and devotion to Islamic duty in the deeds of the *Anṣār* who set the highest example of selfless love towards their *Muhājir* brothers who had emigrated for the sake of their religion and arrived in Madīnah possessing nothing. The *Anṣār* offered them everything, to the extent that one of them told his *Muhājir* brother: "This is my wealth: take half of it. And these are my two wives: see which one is more pleasing to you and tell me, so I will divorce her and she can become your wife after she has completed her *'iddah*." The *Muhājir* responded to his brother's kindness and affection with something even better. He told him: "May Allah bless your wealth and your wives for you. I have no need of them. Just show me where the market is so that I can work."

An *Anṣārī* welcomed his *Muhājir* brother as a guest when he had no food in his home except what was just enough for his children, but he preferred his brother over himself and his family, so he told his wife, "Put your sons to bed and extinguish the lamp, then offer what you have to our guest. We will sit with him at the table, and make him think that we are eating, but we will not eat." So they sat at the table, and the guest alone ate, while the couple stayed hungry all night. The next morning, the *Anṣārī* went to the Prophet (SAAS) and told him what had happened. The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Allah is pleased with what you have done for your guest this night." [Agreed upon]

The selfless attitude of the *Ansār* towards the *Muhājirīn* and their willingness to support them with their wealth reached such an extent that they asked the Prophet (SAAS): "Divide the date-palms between us and our brothers." He said, "No." So they said to the *Muhājirīn*, "Help us to tend the trees, and we will share the crop with you." The *Muhājirīn* said, "To hear is to obey." [al-Bukhārī]

The *Muhājirīn* greatly appreciated the good deeds of their *Ansār* brothers, and told the Prophet (SAAS): "O Messenger of Allah, we have never seen anything like this people to whom we have come: if they have a little, they are still willing to help, and if they have plenty, they are most generous. They have supported us and shared their wealth with us, so much so that we feared that they would receive all the reward." The Prophet (SAAS) said: "No, not so long as you praise them and pray to Allah for them."[1]

It was sufficient for the *Ansār* that Allah praised them and commended their good deeds. He revealed an *āyah* of the Qur'ān which would be recited, and the story of their unique selflessness would be told, for all time, and would serve as a realistic and vivid example of how people can break free from selfish greed:

> **"But those who before them, had homes (in Madīnah) and had adopted the Faith - show their affection to such as had come to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved**

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, and by Ahmad, Abu Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nisā'ī. Its *isnād* is *sahīh*.

> **from the covetousness of their own souls - they are the ones that achieve prosperity."**
> [al-Ḥashr 59:9]

Whenever people are called upon to make sacrifices and be generous, this Qur'ānic description of the *Anṣār* will remain forever a beacon of guidance and a shining example to mankind who is lost in greed and covetousness.

The *Anṣār* understood the meaning of the brotherhood of faith when the Prophet (SAAS) established the ties of brotherhood between them and the *Muhājirīn*. They were true believers who liked for their brothers what they liked for themselves, as they had learned from the Prophet (SAAS). They did not withhold any of their worldly goods from their brothers, but they willingly offered them half of what they possessed. At the beginning of the *hijrah*, they made the *Muhājirīn* their heirs, to the exclusion of their own relatives, in order to fulfil the duties of brotherhood which the Prophet (SAAS) had taught them. This is seen in the report narrated by al-Bukhārī from Ibn 'Abbās, who said:

> "When the *Muhājirīn* came to Madīnah, a *Muhājir* would inherit from an *Anṣārī* to the exclusion of his own relatives. When the *āyah* '. . . **But kindred of blood have prior rights against each other . . .**' [*al-Anfāl* 8:75] was revealed, this inheritance was abrogated, but the duties of support, help, selflessness and beneficence remained."

He prays for his brothers in their absence

The sincere Muslim who truly likes for his brother that which he likes for himself does not forget to pray for his brother in his

absence, which is a practical demonstration of his brotherly love and care. He knows that this is the prayer which is most quickly answered, because it is characterized by sincerity and purity. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The quickest prayer to be answered is a man's supplication for his brother in his absence."[1]

Hence the Prophet (SAAS) asked 'Umar (RA) to pray for him, when 'Umar came and sought permission to perform *'umrah.* 'Umar (RA) said:

> "I asked the Prophet (SAAS) for permission to perform *'umrah.* He gave me permission and said: 'Do not forget us in your prayers.' He told me something that meant more to me than the whole world."[2]

The *Ṣaḥābah* understood this and used to ask their brothers to pray for them whenever they were in a situation where their prayers would be answered. Men and women alike shared this virtue, which is indicative of the high level of the entire society during that golden period of our history. Al-Bukhārī reports, in *al-Adab al-Mufrad,* from Ṣafwān ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ṣafwān, whose wife was al-Dardā' bint Abī'l-Dardā'. He said: "I came to visit them in Damascus; I found Umm al-Dardā' in the house, but Abū'l-Dardā' was not there. She said, 'Do you want to go to *Ḥajj*?' I said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Pray for me, for the Prophet (SAAS) used to say, "The Muslim's prayer for his absent brother will be answered. There is an angel at his head who, whenever he prays for his

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth.*

brother, says 'Āmīn, and you shall have likewise.''''' He (Ṣafwān) said, "I met Abū'l-Dardā' in the market and he told me something similar, reporting from the Prophet (SAAS)."

The Prophet (SAAS) taught his *Ṣaḥābah* team spirit and the importance of caring for others. At every opportunity he would direct them towards a true understanding of brotherhood, so that there would be no room for the selfish individualism which makes eyes blind and seals hearts.

An example of the way the Prophet (SAAS) instilled the spirit of brotherhood in people's hearts and removed the seeds of selfishness is his words to the man who prayed, "O Allah, forgive me and Muḥammad only." He told him, "You have denied it to many people." Thus he taught him that Islam forbids a Muslim to seek good only for himself, even if the Prophet (SAAS) is included in that. The believer must love for his brother what he loves for himself.

Such is the true Muslim, who loves for his brother what he loves for himself: he is sincere towards his brothers; he safeguards their reputation, honour and wealth both in their presence and in their absence; he prefers them to himself; he is tolerant and forgiving of their faults and mistakes; he is gentle, kind and humble towards them; he is decent in his dealings with them, in word and deed. He is generous, not miserly; truthful, not a liar; friendly, not hostile. He is reliable and trustworthy and does not betray them; he is straightforward, not two-faced. It is no wonder that the true Muslim is like this, for this is the miracle that Islam has wrought in men's characters. This is the Muslim as Islam meant him to be.

CHAPTER 9

THE MUSLIM AND HIS COMMUNITY/SOCIETY

Introduction

The Muslim who is aware of the teachings of his religion is a social person, because he has a mission in life, and those who have a mission in life have no choice but to be in contact with people, mixing with them, dealing with them and engaging in give-and-take.

The Muslim is social in the best way, according to his understanding of the true religion and the noble human values that it advocates and encourages in the field of social interaction.

The social personality of the Muslim, which is infused with the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, is a unique personality that cannot be compared to the social personality developed by any contemporary manmade system, or by any of the ancient laws devised by philosophers and thinkers. It is a social personality of the highest quality, composed of a great number of noble characteristics which are mentioned in the Qur'an and *aḥādīth*. Islam has made adherence to these characteristics a religious duty for which a man will be rewarded, and will be called to account if he neglects it. In this way, Islam was able to make the personality of the true Muslim a brilliant example of a good, clean-living, pious, well-mannered social individual.

The Islamic references which speak about social relations are quite amazing in their abundance, comprehensiveness and precision. These sources do not ignore any aspect of social interaction, and they point to the high and pure level that Islam wants the Muslim to reach. No doubt the Muslim will reach it, when the reality of Islam is firmly entrenched in his heart and soul, pervading his entire being.

The soundness of the Muslim's social personality is based on his adherence to the laws of Allah in his interaction with people. From this major basic feature of Islamic belief stem the social manners and morals that the pious, sincere Muslim adheres to in his dealings with others. On this firm foundation, the true Muslim establishes his social relationships.

He is truthful

He is truthful with all people, because the guidance of Islam with which his very being is infused has taught him that truthfulness is the chief of virtues. Truthfulness naturally leads to goodness, which will admit the one who practices it to Paradise, while falsehood leads to iniquity which will send the one who practices it to Hell. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Truthfulness leads to piety (*birr*), and piety leads to Paradise. A man continues to speak the truth until he is recorded in the sight of Allah as a sincere lover of truth (*siddīq*). Falsehood leads to iniquity and iniquity leads to Hell. A man will continue to speak falsehood until he is recorded in the sight of Allah as a liar." [Agreed upon]

Therefore the Muslim is a sincere lover of truth, striving to be true in word and deed. This is a high and noble status indeed, to be recorded in the sight of one's Lord as a sincere lover of truth.

He does not cheat, deceive or stab in the back

The truthful Muslim who has attained this status does not cheat, deceive or stab in the back, because the requirements of truthfulness are sincerity, purity, fairness and loyalty. This leaves no room for cheating, deception, unfairness and betrayal.

The sensitive, sincere Muslim will not tolerate cheating, indeed he will have a complete aversion to it, because he is aware that doing this evil deed will put him beyond the pale of Islam. The Prophet (SAAS) stated, in a *ḥadīth* narrated by Muslim:

> "Whoever bears arms against us is not one of us,
> and whoever cheats us is not one of us."

In another report also narrated by Muslim, the Prophet (SAAS) passed by a pile of food (in the market), put his hand in it and felt dampness (although the surface of the pile was dry). He said, "O owner of the food, what is this?" The man said, "It was damaged by rain, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "And you did not put the rain-damaged food on top so that people could see it! Whoever cheats us is not one of us."

The community of Muslims is a community built on love and sincerity, whose individual members are endowed with piety, truthfulness and faithfulness. So there is no room in this community for cheats, swindlers, double crossers, tricksters, ungrateful wretches or traitors.

The Prophet (SAAS) severely condemned cheats, swindlers and traitors, but it was not enough to denounce them and exclude them from the Muslim community in this world; he went on to announce that on the Day of Resurrection, every traitor would be raised carrying the flag of his betrayal and a caller will cry out in the vast arena of judgement, pointing to him and drawing attention to him:

> "Every traitor will have a banner on the Day of Resurrection, and it will be said, 'This is the betrayer of so-and-so.'" [Agreed upon]

How great will be the shame of those traitors who thought that their betrayal was long since forgotten, and now here it is, spread out for all to see and carried aloft on banners held by their own hands.

Their shame of the Day of Judgement will increase when they see the Prophet (SAAS), who is the hope of intercession on that great and terrible Day, standing in opposition to them, because they have committed the heinous crime of betrayal which is a crime of such enormity that it will deprive them of the mercy of Allah and the intercession of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "There are three whom I will oppose on the Day of Resurrection: a man who gave his word then betrayed; a man who sold a free man into slavery and kept the money; and a man who hired someone, benefitted from his labour, then did not pay his wages." [al-Bukhārī]

The Muslim who has true Islamic sensitivities avoids deceit, cheating, treachery and lies no matter what benefits or profits such activities might bring him, because Islam considers those who are

guilty of such deeds to be hypocrites. Hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell, and there will be no-one to help them on the Day of Judgement:

> **"The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire: no helper will you find for them."**
> [*al-Nisā'* 4:145]

The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "There are four features, whoever has all of them is a true hypocrite and whoever has one of them has one of the qualities of a hypocrite until he gives it up: when he is trusted, he is unfaithful; when he speaks he tells lies; when he makes a promise, he proves treacherous; and when he disputes, he resorts to slander." [Agreed upon]

He is not envious

Another evil characteristic which does not befit the true Muslim is envy (*ḥasad*[1]). The Prophet (SAAS) issued stern warnings against it and advised that faith and envy do not belong together:

> "Faith and envy do not go together in the heart of the servant."[2]

Damurah ibn Tha'labah (RA) said:

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[1]Arabic differentiates between "innocent" envy (*ghibṭah*), which desires something good that another person has, without wanting to deprive him of it, and the kind of envy or jealousy (*ḥasad*) which seeks to deprive another person of good fortune. [Translator]

[2]Reported by Ibn Hibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'The people will be fine as long as they do not envy one another.'"[1]

One of the qualities of the true Muslim is that his soul is free from deceit, envy, treachery and malice. This purity of heart will grant him entry to Paradise, even if he is not one of those who perform many acts of worship, spending nights in prayer and fasting during the day. Imām Aḥmad reported with a *ḥasan isnād* and al-Nisā'ī reported from Anas ibn Mālik (RA) who said:

> "We were sitting with the Prophet (SAAS) and he said, 'One of the people of Paradise will now come to you,' and a man of the *Anṣār* came along, his beard dripping from his *wuḍū'* and carrying his sandals in his left hand. The next day, the Prophet (SAAS) said the same thing, and the same man appeared, looking the same as he had on the previous day. On the third day, the Prophet (SAAS) again said the same thing, and the same man appeared again. When the Prophet (SAAS) left, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ followed the man and said, 'I have fallen out with my father and sworn that I will not enter his house for three (days), and I thought that I could stay with you until this time is up.' He said, 'Fine'." Anas said: "'Abdullah used to tell how he stayed with him for those three nights and never saw the man get up to pray at night, but when he awoke and turned over in his sleep he would mention Allah and say '*Allahu akbar*,' until he got up for *ṣalat al-fajr*. 'Abdullah said: "But I never heard him say

[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its narrators (*ruwāt*) are trustworthy.

> anything but good. When the three days were over and I had begun to think that his deeds were nothing remarkable, I said, 'O servant of Allah! There was no quarrel between me and my father, but I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say three times, 'one of the people of Paradise will come to you,' and you appeared each time, so I wanted to come and stay with you to see what you did, so I could follow your example, but I did not see you do anything out of the ordinary. What is it that has raised you to such a great status as the Prophet (SAAS) said?' The man said, 'It is only what you have seen.' When I turned away, he called me back and said, 'It is only what you have seen, but I do not hold anything against any Muslim in my heart, and I do not envy anyone for the blessings that Allah has bestowed on him.' 'Abdullah said: 'This is what raised you to that great status, and this is what we could not achieve.'"

This *ḥadīth* indicates the effects of having a heart that is free of hatred, envy, malice and treachery, and its impact on deciding a person's fate in the Hereafter, raising his status in the sight of Allah and making his deeds acceptable, even if they are few. These effects can be clearly seen in the example of this man whose acts of worship were few, but he would enter Paradise because of the purity of his heart and the fact that people were safe from harm on his part. These effects are in direct contrast with the woman about whom the Prophet (SAAS) was asked; although she spent her nights in prayer and her days fasting, she used to insult

her neighbours, so the Prophet (SAAS) said, "She will be in Hell."[1]

The one who weighs heavily in the balance of Islam (i.e., is successful) is the sincere man whose heart is free from deceit, treachery, envy and hatred, even if his acts of worship are few. Despite the paucity of his worship, he is like a pure, solid brick in the structure of the Islamic community. The one whose heart is filled with hatred, envy, deceit and malice towards people, weighs lightly in the balance of Islam (i.e., is a failure), even if his acts of worship are many, because he is like a weak brick in the structure of the community; this weak link and others like it, may be the cause of its collapse. The ideal Muslim as Islam wants him to be combines faithful worship, purity of heart and good treatment of others, so that his inward character is in accordance with his outward appearance and his deeds confirm his words. Through this Muslim and others like him, the structure of the Muslim community will be reinforced and strengthened, until it is as the Prophet (SAAS) described it: "like a wall, parts of which support other parts" [Muslim]. This is the pure, cohesive community that deserves to carry the message of Allah to mankind.

He is sincere

The true Muslim is not only free of those negative characteristics, but he is also endowed with the constructive, positive attitude of true sincerity towards every Muslim in his community, believing that his religion is essentially sincerity, as the Prophet (SAAS) described it:

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

> "Religion is sincerity." The *Sahābah* asked, "To whom?" He said, "To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and to their common folk." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

When the *Sahābah* swore allegiance (*bay'ah*) to the Prophet (SAAS), they would pledge to observe *salāt* and *zakāt*, and to be sincere towards every Muslim, as is shown in the statement of Jarīr ibn 'Abdullah (RA):

> "I swore allegiance to the Prophet (SAAS) with the pledge that I would establish regular prayer, pay *zakāt* and be sincere to every Muslim."
> [Agreed upon]

The fact that sincerity (*nasīhah*) was mentioned in conjunction with *salāt* and *zakāt* in the oath of allegiance given by this great *Sahābī* to the Prophet (SAAS), is an indication of its importance in the Islamic scheme of things and in deciding a person's fate in the Hereafter. Therefore it is a basic characteristic of the true Muslim who is concerned about his destiny on the Day of Judgement.

The importance of sincerity in deciding the fate of a Muslim in the Hereafter increases when he is given some responsibility over other Muslims. Then it becomes his key to eternal Paradise: if he does not attain it in this world, he will be denied access to Paradise in the Hereafter. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "There is no servant whom Allah entrusts with the care of those under his authority and he dies having been insincere or deceitful in his duty, but Allah will deny Paradise to him" [Agreed upon]. According to another report, he (SAAS) said: "If

he has not surrounded them with his sincerity, he will not even smell the perfume of Paradise."

According to a report given by Muslim, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "There is no leader entrusted with the affairs of the Muslims, and then does not do his best for them and is not sincere towards them, but he will not enter Paradise with them."

How great is the responsibility of the ruler in Islam and of everyone who has been entrusted with some of the affairs of the Muslims! How great is the impact of sincerity in fulfilling this duty, on the ultimate fate of the one who has been entrusted with it, on the Day when mankind will be resurrected to face the Lord of the Worlds. Our attention is drawn to the responsibility of each one of us in his own social circle by the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock (i.e. those under his care)."

This clearly demonstrates the comprehensiveness of that responsibility in the Muslim society: hardly anyone can evade it. Hence the true Muslim community, which is based on these divine principles and values, is the most civilized, secure and moral of all human societies.

He keeps his promises

The true Muslim who is endowed with a positive Islamic attitude, also keeps his promises faithfully. It is no exaggeration to say that this attitude is one of the most important factors in a person's

success in his community, and is one of the clearest indicators of his high level of civility and superior standing in his community.

The Muslim is one of these civil types of people who keep their promises: indeed, he is the best of them, if he is a true Muslim, because this attitude of faithfulness in keeping promises is at the heart of Islamic morals and manners, and is one of the most indicative signs of the soundness of a Muslim's faith and Islam. Many *āyāt* and *aḥādīth* encourage the fostering of this attitude and indicate that it is one of the signs of faith. In contrast, seeking to avoid fulfilling promises is an attitude that is condemned and viewed as a sign of hypocrisy:

> **"O you who believe! Fulfil (all) obligations."** [*al-Mā'idah* 5:1]

> **". . . And fulfil (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)"** [*al-Isrā'* 17:34]

A promise is not an empty word to be uttered casually with no intention of fulfilment, as too many Muslims do nowadays. It is a serious responsibility, for which we will be called to account:

> **"Fulfil the Covenant of Allah, when you have entered into it . . ."** [*al-Naḥl* 16:91]

A promise is a covenant with Allah, which gives it a measure of dignity and sanctity: fulfilling it is an obligation, regardless of the circumstances:

> **"O you who believe! Why say you that which you do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight**

of Allah that you say that which you do not."
[*al-Ṣaff* 61:2-3]

Breaking promises is one of the odious sins that Allah abhors in His believing servants; He does not want them to sink to such a level. There is no ambiguity in the interrogative structure at the begining of this *āyah*, where the breaking of promises is so soundly condemned that the true believer would strive to avoid this sin and would tremble with fear of his Lord.

The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted with something, he betrays that trust" [Agreed upon]. According to a report given by Muslim, he (SAAS) added: "Even if he fasts, prays, and thinks that he is a Muslim."

The level of a person's Islam is not only confirmed by the acts of worship he performs, like *ṣalāt*, *ṣawm* or *Ḥajj*. Rather, it is confirmed by a personality that is characterized by devotion to the teachings of Islam, so that the person is distinguished by its noble values and attitudes, and you see him adhering to the limits set by Allah, obeying His commandments, avoiding that which He has prohibited, and following His guidance in all his affairs.

Thus the attitudes of falsehood, betrayal and breaking of promises will be eliminated from the life of the true Muslim, because they are diametrically opposed to Islamic attitudes and belong only to hypocrites.

Let this bitter reality be known to the many businessmen, craftsmen and employees who promise to complete their work within a certain time, then break their promises; to those who give their word then dissolve their pledges; to those who are entrusted with money, secrets or inheritances, and betray that trust. Let all of these people know that they are among the hypocrites, even if they fast, pray and claim to be Muslims, and that hypocrites will be in the lowest level of Hell.

He has a good attitude towards others and treats them well

The true Muslim has a good attitude in his dealings with others. He is humble, and is soft and gentle in his speech, following the guidance of Islam and the example of the Prophet (SAAS).

The Prophet (SAAS), as his servant Anas reported, was "the best of people in his attitude towards others" [Agreed upon]. Anas was not exaggerating, nor did he let his love for the Prophet (SAAS) make him exaggerate. The attitude of the Prophet (SAAS) that he witnessed was something unheard of. Anas (RA) tells us of one aspect of that noble attitude of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "I served the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) for ten years, and he never said to me '*Uff!*' (The mildest word of contempt in Arabic). If I did something, he never said, 'Why did you do that?' And if I did not do something, he never said, 'Why did you not do such-and-such?'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) was not a person who used bad language or insulted others. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ reported that the Prophet (SAAS) repeatedly told his Companions:

> "Among the best of you are those who have the best attitude (towards others)." [Agreed upon]

He also said:

> "Bad language and vile talk have nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. The best of people in Islam are those who have the best attitude (towards others)."[1]

And:

> "The most beloved to me and the closest to me on the Day of Resurrection will be those of you who have the best attitudes. And the most hateful to me and the furthest from me on the Day of Resurrection will be the prattlers and boasters and *al-mutafayhiqūn*." The *Ṣaḥābah* said, "O Messenger of Allah, we understand who the prattlers and boasters are, but who are *al-mutafayhiqūn*?" He said, "The proud and arrogant."[2]

The *Ṣaḥābah* (RA) used to hear the Prophet's noble moral teachings, and they would see with their own eyes the excellent way in which he used to deal with people. So they would obey his words and follow his example. Thus was established their society which has never been equalled by any other in the history of mankind.

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī, Ahmad and Abū Ya'lā; its men are *thiqāt*.

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

Anas (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was merciful. Nobody came to him without receiving a promise of his help, which he would fulfil if he had the means to do so. On one occasion, the *iqāmah* for prayer had been given, when a Bedouin came to him, took hold of his cloak, and said, 'I still have some matter outstanding, and I do not want to forget it.' So the Prophet (SAAS) went with him and resolved the matter, then he came back and prayed."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) did not see anything wrong with listening to the Bedouin and resolving his issue, even though the *iqāmah* had already been given. He did not get upset with the man for pulling on his cloak, or object to resolving the matter before the prayer, because he was building a just society, teaching the Muslims by his example how a Muslim should treat his brother, and showing them the moral principles that should prevail in a Muslim community.

If good attitudes and manners among non-Muslims are the result of a good upbringing and solid education, then among Muslims such good attitudes come, above all, from the guidance of Islam, which makes good attitudes a basic characteristic of the Muslim, one which will raise his status in this world and will weigh heavily in his favour in the Hereafter. No deed will count for more on the Day of Judgement than a man's good attitude, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

> "Nothing will weigh more heavily in the balance of the believing servant on the Day of Resurrection than a good attitude (towards others). Verily Allah hates those who utter vile words and obscene speech."[1]

Islam has made this good attitude towards others an essential part of faith, as those who have the best attitude towards others are the most complete in faith, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The most perfect in faith of the believers are those who are best in their attitude towards others."[2]

Islam also describes those who have the best attitude towards others as being the most beloved to Allah of His servants. This is seen in the *ḥadīth* of Usāmah ibn Shurayk, who said:

> "We were sitting with the Prophet (SAAS) as if there were birds on our heads: none of us were talking. Some people came to him and asked, 'Who is the most beloved to Allah of His servants?' He said, 'Those who are the best in attitude towards others.'"[3]

It comes as no surprise that the person who has the best attitude towards others should also be the one who is most beloved to Allah, for good treatment of others is an important feature of Islamic law. It is the most significant deed that can be placed in

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth.*

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*

[3]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ.*

the balance of the Muslim on the Day of Judgement, as we have seen. It is equivalent to prayer and fasting, the two greatest bases of Islam, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No greater deed will be placed in the balance than a good attitude towards others. A good attitude towards others will bring a person up to the level of fasting and prayer."[1] According to another report, he (SAAS) said: "By virtue of his good attitude towards others, a person may reach the level of one who habitually fasts (during the day) and stands in prayer (at night)."

So the Prophet (SAAS) repeatedly emphasized the importance of a good attitude and encouraged his Companions to adopt it, using various methods to instil it in their hearts by his words and deeds. He understood the great impact this good attitude would have in purifying their souls and enhancing their morals and manners. For example, he told Abū Dharr:

> "O Abū Dharr, shall I not tell you of two qualities which are easy to attain but which will weigh more heavily in the balance?" He said, "Of course, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "You should have a good attitude towards others and remain silent for lengthy periods. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, nothing that people have ever attained is better than these two."[2]

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī and al-Bazār; its men are *thiqāt*.

[2]Reported by Abu Ya'lā and al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsāṭ*; the men of Abu Ya'lā are *thiqāt*.

And he said:

> "A good attitude is a blessing and a bad attitude is a calamity. Piety (*birr*) lengthens life, and charity will prevent a bad death."[1]

One of his *du'ā's* was:

> "*Allāhumma aḥsanta khalqī fa aḥsin khulqī* (O Allah, You have made my physical constitution good, so make my attitude and behaviour good also)."[2].

The prayer of the Prophet (SAAS), aking Allah to make his attitude better when Allah had described him in the Qur'ān as being **". . . on an exalted standard of character"** [*al-Qalam* 68:4], is a clear indication of his deep concern and earnest desire that the Muslims should continue to seek to increase in good attitudes, no matter what heights they had already scaled, just as their Prophet (SAAS) continued to seek to increase in good attitudes through this *du'ā'*. "Good attitudes" is a comprehensive term which includes all the good characteristics that human beings may acquire, such as modesty, patience, gentleness, forgiveness, tolerance, cheerfulness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, sincerity, straightforwardness, purity of heart, and so on.

The one who sets out to explore the Islamic teachings on social issues will find himself confronted with a host of teachings that encourage every single one of these noble attitudes. This is an

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb*.

[2]Reported by Ahmad; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*

indication of the intense concern that Islam has to form the social personality of the Muslim in the most precise fashion. So it does not stop at mentioning generalities, but it also deals with every minor moral issue that may form individual aspects of the integrated social personality. This comprehensiveness does not exist in other social systems as it does in Islam.

The researcher has no alternative but to examine all of these texts, and to understand the guidance and legislation contained therein. Only then will he be able to fully comprehend the noble social personality that is unique to the true Muslim.

We have examined above some of these texts which explain aspects of the personality of the Muslim who is following his religion and adhering to the commandments and prohibitions of his Lord. From this study, it is clear that the true Muslim is truthful and faithful, he does not cheat, deceive, betray or envy, and he treats all people well. Now we will examine a number of other texts which define the characteristics of the Muslim social personality in all its aspects.

He is characterized by shyness (*ḥayā'*)

The true Muslim has the characteristic of shyness (*ḥayā'*), following the example of the Prophet (SAAS). The great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah was more shy than the virgin hiding away in her own room. If he saw something that he disliked, we would know it only from his facial expression." [Agreed upon]

Shyness (*ḥayā'*), as defined by the *'ulamā'*, is a noble attitude which always motivates a person to avoid bad deeds and prevents

him from failing in his duties towards those who have rights over him. The Prophet (SAAS) encouraged this attitude, as is seen in a number of *aḥādīth*, and counted it as pure goodness both for the one who possesses this virtue and for the society in which he lives.

'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Shyness brings nothing but good'" [Agreed upon]. According to a report given by Muslim, he (SAAS) said: "Shyness is all good."

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Faith has seventy-odd branches. The greatest of them is saying *lā ilāha ill-Allah*, and the least of them is removing something harmful from the road. Shyness is one of the branches of faith." [Agreed upon]

The true Muslim is shy, polite, gentle and sensitive to the feelings of others. He never does any bad deed that may harm others, and he does not fail in his duty towards anyone who has a right over him.

This attitude of shyness will protect him from all these errors, not only because he feels shy in front of people, but because he also feel shy before Allah, and is afraid to **"confuse his beliefs with wrong"** [*al-An'ām* 6:82]. Shyness is described as being a branch of faith, which is the most effective way of encouraging this virtue.

This connection between moral motives and belief in Allah and the Last Day makes the Muslim stand out from others by virtue of

the deep sincerity of his attitudes and the lasting quality and consistency of his morals, no matter how much times and circumstances change. That is because they stem from a sensitive, living conscience that fears committing betrayal. He feels more shy before Allah, Who knows all hidden secrets, than he does before people, who see only his outward appearance, and it is this shyness that marks the parting of the ways between the morals of the Muslim and the morals of the non-Muslim.

He is gentle towards people

The true Muslim is gentle and kind towards people when it is appropriate. Kindness and gentleness are qualities which Allah loves in His believing servants, because they make a person mild and soft in a way that endears him to others:

> **"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint - none but persons of the greatest good fortune."** [*Fussilat* 41:34-35]

Many *āyāt* and *ahādīth* reinforce the message that kindness is a noble attitude, one that should prevail in a Muslim community and in each member of that community who understands the guidance and teachings of Islam. It suffices the Muslim to know that kindness is one of the attributes of Allah that He loves to see in His servants:

> "Verily Allah is kind and loves kindness in all affairs." [Agreed upon]

It is a tremendous virtue which Allah rewards in a way unlike any other:

> "Allah is Kind and loves kindness, and He rewards it in a way that He does not reward harshness, and in a way unlike any other." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) encouraged kindness and viewed it as something beautiful and endearing, the absence of which is repulsive:

> "There is no kindness in a thing but it makes it beautiful, and there is no absence of kindness in a thing but it makes it repugnant." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) taught the Muslims to be kind in their dealings with people, and to behave in an exemplary manner as befits the Muslim who is calling people to the religion of Allah, the Kind and Merciful, no matter how provocative the situation. Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "A Bedouin urinated in the mosque, and the people got up to sort him out. But the Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Leave him alone and throw a bucket of water over his urine, for you have been raised to be easy on the people, not hard on them.'" [al-Bukhārī]

Kindness, gentleness and tolerance, not harshness, aggression and rebukes, are what open people's hearts to the message of truth. The Prophet (SAAS) used to advise the Muslims:

> "Make things easy, not difficult, and be cheerful, not threatening." [Agreed upon]

People are naturally put off by rudeness and harshness, but they are attracted to kindness and gentleness. Hence Allah said to His Prophet (SAAS): **". . . were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you."** [*Āl 'Imrān* 3:159]

This is an eternal declaration, that applies to every *dā'ī* who seeks to call people to Islam, so that he may find a way to their hearts and follow a path of kindness and gentleness, even if the person being called is an oppressor or wrongdoer. This is what Allah told His Prophet Musa (AS) and his brother Hārūn when He sent them to Pharaoh:

> **"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds; but speak to him mildly; perchance he may take warning or fear (Allah)."** [*Ṭā-Hā* 20:43-44]

Not surprisingly, kindness, according to Islam, is all goodness. Whoever attains it has been given all goodness and whoever does not attain it is truly a loser, as is reflected in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Jarīr ibn 'Abdullah, who said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'Whoever has been denied kindness has been denied all goodness." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) explained that this goodness will be bestowed upon individuals, households and peoples when kindness prevails in their lives and is one of their foremost characteristics. We find this in the *ḥadīth* of 'Ā'ishah (RA) in which the Prophet (SAAS) told her:

> "O 'Ā'ishah, be kind, for if Allah wills some good to a household, He guides them to kindness."

> According to another report, he (SAAS) said: "If Allah wills some good to a household, He instils kindness in them."[1]

Jābir (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'If Allah wills some good to a people, He instils kindness in them.'"[2]

What greater goodness can there be than a characteristic that will protect a man from Hell? As the Prophet (SAAS) said in another *ḥadīth*:

> "Shall I not tell you who will be forbidden from the Fire, or from whom the Fire will be forbidden? It will be forbidden for every gentle, soft-hearted and kind person."[3]

The teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) take man a step further, by instilling in him the attitude of kindness and requiring him to be kind even to the animals he slaughters. This is counted as one of the highest levels that the pious and righteous may reach:

> "Allah has prescribed proficiency[4] in all things. Thus, if you kill, kill well, and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad; the men of the second report are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

[2]Reported by al-Bazār; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

[3]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

[4]The word translated here as "proficiency" is *iḥsān*, which also has connotations of doing well, decency, etc. [Translator]

> blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters." [Muslim]

Kindness to dumb animals that are to be slaughtered is indicative of the kindness of the man who slaughters them, and of his mercy towards all living creatures. The more a person understands this and treats all living creatures well, the more kind and gentle a person he is. This is the ultimate goal towards which Islam is guiding the Muslim, so that he is kind even to animals.

He is compassionate and merciful

The Muslim who truly understand the teachings of Islam is compassionate and merciful, for he understands that the compassion of people on earth will cause the mercy of heaven to be showered upon them:

> "Have compassion on those who are on earth so that the One Who is in heaven will have mercy on you."[1]

The Muslim has learned from his religion that:

> "Whoever does not show compassion to people, Allah will not have mercy on him."[2]

And:

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

[2]Reported by al-Tabarānī; its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

"Compassion is not taken away except from the one who is doomed."[1]

The true Muslim does not limit his compassion only to his family, children, relatives and friends, but he extends it to include all people. This is in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) which included all people and made this compassion a condition of faith, as Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ari narrated from the Prophet (SAAS):

> "You will not believe until you have compassion towards one another." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, all of us are compassionate." He said, "It is not the compassion of any one of you towards his friend, but it is compassion towards all people and compassion towards the common folk."[2]

This is comprehensive, all-embracing compassion, extending to all people, that Islam has awoken in the Muslim, so that the Muslim community may become a source of mutual compassion filled with deep love, compassion and sincerity.

The Prophet (SAAS) was a brilliant example of compassion, and was the embodiment of this virtue, so much so that when he led the prayer, if he heard a child crying, he would be filled with mercy and compassion for the mother who would be distressed by her child's crying. So he would shorten the prayer, as was reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Anas (RA):

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]Reported by al-Tabarānī; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'I commenced the prayer, and I intended to make it long, but I heard a child crying, so I cut my prayer short because of the distress I knew his mother would be feeling.'"

A Bedouin came to the Prophet (SAAS) and asked, "Do you kiss your sons? For we do not kiss them." He said, "What can I do for you when Allah has removed compassion from your heart?" [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) kissed al-Ḥasan ibn 'Ali when al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis al-Tamīmī was sitting with him. Al-Aqra' said: "I have ten children and I have never kissed any of them." The Prophet (SAAS) looked at him and said: "The one who does not show compassion will not be shown mercy." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

'Umar (RA) wanted to appoint a man to some position of authority over the Muslims, then he heard him say something like al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis had said, i.e., that he did not kiss his children. So 'Umar changed his mind about appointing him, and said: "If your heart does not beat with compassion towards your own children, how will you be merciful towards the people? By Allah I will never appoint you." Then he tore up the document he had prepared concerning the man's appointment.

The Prophet (SAAS) expanded the feeling of mercy and compassion in the Muslim conscience to cover animals as well as humans. Al-Bukhārī and Muslim reported from Abu Hurayrah (RA) that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "A man was walking on the road when he felt very thirsty. He saw a well, so he went down into it, drank his fill, then came out. He saw a dog panting and biting the dust with thirst, and said, 'This

> dog's thirst is as severe as mine was.' So he went back down into the well, filled his shoes with water, held them in his mouth (while he climbed out), and gave the dog water. Allah thanked him and forgave him." They asked, "O Messenger of Allah, will we be rewarded for kindness towards animals?" He said, "In every living creature there is a reward."

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim also report from Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "A woman was punished because of a cat which she locked up until it died of starvation. She was thrown into Hell. It was said - and Allah knows best - 'You did not feed her or give her water when you locked her up, neither did you let her roam free so that she could eat of the vermin of the earth."

The Prophet (SAAS) reached such heights of mercy that once, when he and his Companions stopped in some place, a bird appeared above his head, as if she was seeking his help and complaining to him of the wrongdoing of a man who had taken her egg. He said: "Which of you has distressed her by taking her egg?" A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, I have taken it." The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Put it back, out of mercy to her."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) wanted, in this instance, to instil a sense of all-encompassing mercy in the conscience of the Muslims, so that they would become compassionate by nature, even to animals,

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

because whoever has the heart to be kind to animals will not be harsh towards his human brother.

The Prophet (SAAS) was full of mercy and compassion towards both people and animals, and he never stopped exhorting the Muslims to be likewise, so that mercy and compassion would pervade the world of the Muslims and fill their societies and lands. When compassion spreads upon earth, an abundance of divine mercy descends upon the lands and its inhabitants from on high, according to the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Have compassion on those who are on earth so that the One Who is in heaven will have mercy on you."[1]

He is tolerant and forgiving

The true Muslim who adheres to the teachings of his religion is tolerant and forgiving. Tolerance is a noble human characteristic which is highly commended in the Qur'ān, where those who attain this virtue are viewed as the supreme example of piety in Islam and are included in the group of those doers of good who have succeeded in earning the love and pleasure of Allah:

> **"... Who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men - for Allah loves those who do good."** [*Āl 'Imrān* 3:134]

Such people have restrained their anger and refrained from bearing grudges. They have freed themselves from the burden of hatred and entered a brave new world of tolerance and forgiveness. They

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

have gained purity of heart and peace of mind and, more importantly, they have won the love and pleasure of Allah.

Tolerance and forgiveness are sublime attitudes that none can attain except those whose hearts are receptive to the guidance of Islam and its noble teachings. They prefer forgiveness, reward and honour from Allah to their ego's desire for revenge.

In the most brilliant fashion, the Qur'ān motivates the human soul to attain this difficult, high level. It allows the one who is oppressed to defend himself and resist that oppression and aggression. It allows recompense for injury ("an eye for an eye") but it does not allow the man who has been wronged to be overtaken by the desire for self-defence and revenge. Rather, it gently leads him towards the level of patience, tolerance and forgiveness, and states that this is something that takes a great deal of determination and willpower:

> **"And those who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves.**
> **The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) loves not those who do wrong.**
> **But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong (done) to them, against such is no cause of blame.**
> **The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice: for such there will be a Penalty grievous.**

But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs."
[*al-Shūrā* 42:39-43]

When Abu Bakr (RA) was overwhelmed with sorrow because of the slander he had heard uttered by some against his daughter 'Ā'ishah (RA), he vowed to himself that he would cut off his help to those ungrateful recipients of his bounty who had joined in the sinful gossip. But Allah revealed:

"Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want, and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause: Let them forgive and overlook, do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."
[*al-Nūr* 24:22]

Interactions between individuals in a Muslim community are not based on blaming, censure and seeking revenge for every major or minor issue. Rather they are based on tolerance, overlooking faults, forgiveness and patience. This is the teaching of Islam, and this is what is encouraged by the Qur'ān:

"Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will be between whom and you was hatred become as it were your friend and intimate!
And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint - none but persons of the greatest good fortune."
[*Fussilat* 41:34-35]

If evil is always repaid with evil, the result will be intense hatred and bitter grudges. But if evil is repaid with good, it will extinguish the fires of hatred, calm people down, and remove their grudges. The two who were enemies will become true friends when one of them speaks a kind word or smiles compassionately at the other. This is a great victory for the one who repelled evil with something better, and no one attains this but persons of the greatest good fortune, as the Qur'ān states. Such a person responds to the evil he faces with a measure of patience, and repels it with something good.

This is the attitude of a believer in a community of believers. Many *āyāt* of the Qur'ān reinforce this message and seek to instil this attitude in believers' hearts. So the Qur'ān tells believers to restrain their anger in such situations, to be forgiving and to graciously overlook the faults of others, so that no trace of hatred, resentment or malice will remain:

> **". . . so overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness."** [*al-Ḥijr* 15:85]

The *aḥādīth* are no less concerned with this noble human attitude of forgiveness and tolerance. They also encourage it to be established in Muslim hearts, and describe the practical way in which it should affect one's behaviour. This is the example of the Prophet (SAAS), the leader and educator of Muslims, which is to be followed and adhered to.

'Ā'ishah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) never struck any person, woman or servant with his hand, except when he was fighting in the way of Allah, and he never took offence at anything and sought revenge for it,

except when one of the laws of Allah had been violated, and then he would take revenge for the sake of Allah." [Muslim]

He used to follow the commands of Allah:

> **"Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant."**
> [*al-A'rāf* 7:199]

> **". . . Repel (Evil) with what is better . . ."**
> [*Fussilat* 41:34]

The Prophet (SAAS) was a unique example of this sublime attitude, which encompassed all people. He did not repay their evil with evil, rather he repelled it with an attitude of forgiveness, commanding what is right, and turning away from the ignorant. He always repelled evil with something better.

Anas (RA) said:

> "I was walking with the Messenger of Allah (SAAS), and he was wearing a Najrānī cloak with a stiff collar. A Bedouin came up to him and grabbed him roughly, and I looked at the Prophet's shoulder and saw the mark left by his collar because of this rough approach. Then the Bedouin said, 'O Muhammad, order that I be given some of the wealth of Allah that you have!' The Prophet (SAAS) turned to him and smiled, then ordered that he be given something." [Agreed upon]

The attitude of forgiveness was so deeply entrenched in his noble heart that he even forgave the Jewish woman who sent him

poisoned mutton, as al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others narrate. This Jewish woman sent a gift of poisoned mutton to the Prophet (SAAS). He and a group of his Companions began to eat it, then he said, "Stop, it is poisoned!" The woman was brought to the Prophet (SAAS) and he asked her, "What made you do that?" She said, "I wanted to know if you were really a Prophet, in which case Allah would warn you and the poison would not harm you. If you were not a Prophet, then we would be rid of you." The Companions asked, "Shall we kill her?" He said, "No," and forgave her.

When the tribe of Daws rebelled and refused to follow the commands of Allah and His Messenger, al-Tufayl ibn 'Amr al-Dawsī came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said: "Daws have rebelled, so pray to Allah against them." The Prophet (SAAS) faced the *qiblah* and raised his hands, and the people said, "They are finished!" But the Prophet (SAAS), who was merciful and tolerant, and did not want to see the punishment of Allah befall people, prayed for Daws, saying "O Allah, guide Daws and bring them here, O Allah, guide Daws and bring them here, O Allah, guide Daws and bring them here." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) instilled in the Muslims' hearts the attitude of always forgiving and being tolerant, even when faced with harshness and being boycotted. With the deep insight with which Allah had endowed him, he understood that people respond better to tolerance than to harshness. Therefore when 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir asked him, "O Messenger of Allah, tell me the best of deeds," he told him, "O 'Uqbah, maintain ties with the one who cuts you off, give to the one who deprives you, and do not seek revenge on the

one who wrongs you." In another report he said: "Forgive the one who wrongs you."[1]

He is easy-going in his business dealings

The Muslim who understands his religion is tolerant in his dealings with people, because he knows that there is nothing like tolerance for the good man in this world and the next. His tolerant, gentle, easygoing attitude opens the way to people's hearts, and endears him to them, and it also earns him Allah's pleasure, forgiveness and mercy. This is what is stated clearly in the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS).

Jābir (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "May Allah have mercy on the tolerant man, when he buys, when he sells, and when he demands payment." [al-Bukhārī]

Abu Mas'ūd al-Anṣārī said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'A man from those who were before you was brought to account and no goodness was found in him, except that he was a man who used to mix with people; he was rich, and he used to order his employees to let off the one who was in difficulty. Allah said: "We should be even more tolerant than him, so let him off."'" [Muslim]

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Tabarānī; the men of Ahmad's *isnād* are *thiqāt*.

How heavily this attitude will weigh in the balance, and how much will man need it on that great and terrible Day!

He is of cheerful countenance

One of the requirements of this tolerant attitude is that a person should appear cheerful, pleasant and friendly. All of this is part of having a good attitude, and is part of the good deeds encouraged by Islam.

In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, it says that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Do not think little of any good deed, even if it is just meeting your brother with a cheerful countenance."

Al-Bukhārī and Muslim report from the great *Ṣaḥābī* Jarīr ibn 'Abdullah that he said: "The Prophet (SAAS) never saw me, after I embraced Islam, without smiling at me."

The society which is infused with tolerance, friendliness and warmth between its members is a cohesive, friendly, civilized, human society which honours man, respects good manners and is filled with the highest human values. This is the Islamic society envisioned in the sources of Islam, the society which Islam seeks to establish, so that it would stand out from other communities. We can see the huge difference between this sublime society and the materialistic societies in which man suffers crushing emotional dryness, never smiling at a neighbour or relative, and hardly even smiling at his own friend, because he is too preoccupied and concerned with pursuing the needs of that materialistic life which has extinguished the flame of human emotion and spirituality and left him running in endless circles.

He has a sense of humour

The Muslim has a sense of humour, which makes people like him. He mixes with them and jokes with them when it is appropriate to do so, without going to extremes or saying anything hurtful. Similarly, when he is serious, he does not go to extremes of harshness and strictness. His humour is within the limits of Islamic tolerance, and does not go beyond the bounds of truth. This is the example of the Prophet (SAAS) and the *Sahābah* in their jokes and humour. It is reported that the *Sahābah* said to the Prophet (SAAS): "You are joking with us." He said, "But I never say anything but the truth." [al-Bukhārī]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to joke, but he never said anything but the truth in his jokes. The *Sahābah* took the same approach to humour. There are many delightful reports about the jokes exchanged between the Prophet (SAAS) and the *Sahābah*. Among the stories related in the books of *hadīth* and *sīrah* is the report that the Prophet (SAAS) used to joke with the small child of one of the *Sahābah*, a boy called Abu 'Umayr, who had a small bird he used to play with. One day he saw the child looking sad, so he said, "Why do I see Abu 'Umayr looking sad?" The *Sahābah* told him, "The *nughar*[1] which he used to play with has died, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (SAAS) began to gently joke with the child, saying "O Abu Umayr, what happened to the *nughayr*?"[2]

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[1] *Nughar*: a small bird, like a sparrow. [Author]

[2] *Nughayr*: diminutive of *nughar*. [Author] In Arabic, this is a play on words, because of the rhyme between the boy's name and that of the bird. [Translator] This story was reported in *Hayāt al-Sahābah*, 3/149.

A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) to ask him to give him a beast to ride. The Prophet (SAAS) jokingly told him, "I will give you the offspring of a she-camel to ride." He said, "O Messenger of Allah, what will I do with the offspring of a she-camel?" The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Are riding-camels born except from she-camels?"[1]

Imām Aḥmad reported from Anas (RA) that there was a man from the desert people whose name was Zāhir. He used to bring gifts from the desert to the Prophet (SAAS), and in return the Prophet (SAAS) would provide him with whatever he needed when he went out to fight. The Prophet (SAAS) said, "Zāhir is our man of the desert, and we are his town-dwellers." The Prophet (SAAS) loved him very much, and he (Zāhir) was an ugly man. One day the Prophet (SAAS) came to him whilst he was selling some goods. He embraced him from behind. The man could not see him, so he said, "Let me go! Who is this?" Then he turned around and recognized the Prophet (SAAS), so he tried to move closer to him once he knew who it was. The Prophet (SAAS) started to say, "Who will buy this slave?" Zāhir said, "O Messenger of Allah, you will find me unsellable." The Prophet (SAAS) said, "But in the sight of Allah you are not unsellable," or he said, "But in the sight of Allah you are valuable."

An old woman came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said: "O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that I will enter Paradise." He said jokingly, "O Mother of So-and-so, no old women will enter Paradise." The old woman went away crying, so the Prophet (SAAS) said, "Tell her that she will not enter Paradise as an old woman, for Allah says: **'We have created (their Companions) of**

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad, Abu Dāwud and al-Tirmidhī, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād.*

special creation, and made them virgin-pure (and undefiled)' [*al-Wāqi'ah* 56:35-36]."[1]

One of the *ahādīth* that reflect the Prophet's sense of humour and enjoyment of fun is the report that Ahmad gives from 'Ā'ishah (RA) who said: "I went out with the Prophet (SAAS) on a journey. At that time I was a young girl and was quite slender. The Prophet (SAAS) told the people, 'Go on ahead,' so they went ahead, then he said to me, 'Come, let us have a race.' So I raced with him, and I won. He let the matter rest until I had gained weight. Later, I accompanied him on another journey. He told the people, 'Go on ahead,' so they went ahead. He said to me, 'Come, let us have a race.' So I raced with him, and he won. He began to laugh, and said, 'This is for that.'"

The *Sahābah* saw nothing wrong with joking or having fun, as they saw the Prophet (SAAS), their leader and teacher, occasionally doing so. The many delightful stories about their sense of humour reflect the easy-going nature of the first Islamic society, and how far removed it was from narrow-mindedness and gloom.

In *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, al-Bukhārī reports from Bakr ibn 'Abdillah who said: "The Companions of the Prophet (SAAS) used to throw melon-rinds at one another, but when the matter was serious, they were the only true men."

This is moderate, Islamically acceptable humour, which does not go beyond the bounds of truth, or lessen the gravitas or manhood of a person. Rather, it serves its purpose of refreshing hearts and minds.

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī; it is *hasan* because of the existence of corroborating reports.

An example of the *Sahābah*'s sense of humour, which made the Prophet (SAAS) laugh, is the report given by Imām Ahmad from Umm Salamah (RA). Abū Bakr (RA) went to do business in Busrā, and with him were Nu'ayman and Suwaybit ibn Harmalah (RA), both of whom had been present at Badr. Suwaybit was in charge of food on the journey, and Nu'ayman said to him, "Feed me!" Suwaybit said, "Not until Abū Bakr comes." Nu'ayman was a fun-loving man with a sense of humour, so he went to some people who had brought livestock with them, and said, "Will you buy a sturdy Arab slave from me?" They said, "Yes." He said, "He has a big mouth, and he may tell you that he is a free man. If that means that you do not want to take him, then forget the matter, and do not cause trouble for me with him." They said, "No problem, we will buy him." So they bought him for ten young she-camels. Nu'ayman brought the animals back, and told the people: "There he is!" Suwaybit said: "I am a free man!" They said, "He has already told us all about you," and put a rope around his neck and led him away. Then Abū Bakr came, and was told what had happened. He and his companions went and returned the animals and took Suwaybit back. They told the Prophet (SAAS) what had happened, and he and his *Sahābah* would laugh about the story for a year afterwards.

A Bedouin came to the Prophet (SAAS). He entered the mosque and left his camel in the courtyard. Some of his Companions said to Nu'ayman ibn 'Amr al-Ansārī, who was known as al-Nu'ayman: "If you slaughter it, we will eat it, because we want to have some meat, and the Messenger of Allah will pay for it." So al-Nu'ayman slaughtered it. Then the Bedouin came out and saw his saddle, so he shouted, "They have slaughtered my camel, O Muhammad!" The Prophet (SAAS) came out and asked: "Who did this?" They said, "Al-Nu'ayman." So he went looking for him, and found him at the home of Dubā'ah bint al-Zubayr ibn 'Abdul Muttalib (RA), where he had hidden in a ditch and covered

himself with palm branches and leaves. A man pointed to where he was and said, loudly, "I have not seen him, O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (SAAS) brought him out of the ditch, and his face was dirty from where the leaves had fallen on him. The Prophet (SAAS) asked him, "Why did you do that?" Al-Nu'ayman said: "The ones who told you where I was, O Messenger of Allah, are the same ones who told me to do it." The Prophet (SAAS) began wiping his face and laughing, then he paid the price of the slaughtered camel.[1]

There is no clearer indication than these and similar reports of the lightheartedness and sense of humour that Islam wants its followers to have. These qualities will make a person good-natured and likeable, which will enable him to win people's hearts. No-one needs such characteristics more than the Muslim who seeks to call others to Islam.

He is patient

The Muslim who understands his religion trains himself always to be patient and to control his anger, following the teachings of the Qur'ān:

> **". . . who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men - for Allah loves those who do good."**
> [Āl 'Imrān 3:134] [2]

The strong man, according to Islam, is not the one who has muscles and can wrestle others to the ground; rather, it is the one who had equilibrium, patience and self-control:

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[1]See *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/154, 155.

[2]See also the explanation of this issue on pp. 159-161

> "The strong man is not the one who can wrestle, but it is the one who can control himself when he is angry." [Agreed upon]

Self-control at the time of anger is the measure of a man's manhood, because if a man can control himself at such a time, then he will be able to take charge of any situation, prevent conflicts and trouble, reach his goals and earn the pleasure of Allah and people. Hence when a man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and asked him to advise him in just one phrase, he said, "Do not become angry." The man repeated his request for advice, and each time, the Prophet (SAAS) replied with this one phrase that sums up all good attitudes and behaviour: "Do not become angry." [al-Bukhārī]

Ibn'Abbās said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said to Ashajj Abdul-Qays, 'You have two qualities that Allah loves: patience and deliberation.'" [Muslim]

The true Muslim does become angry sometimes, but it is not for his own sake, rather it is for the sake of Allah, if one of His laws is violated or abolished, or one of His rites is insulted. In this case, the Muslim will rise up in anger against the sinful oppressors who deny the laws of Allah and trifle with His *sharī'ah*. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do, as in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Imam Mālik and al-Bukhārī:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) never took revenge for his own sake, but if the laws of Allah were violated, he would take revenge for the sake of Allah."

The Prophet (SAAS) used to become furious, and his face would redden, if he heard some insult to the reputation of Islam, or if he discovered some error or negligence in applying its laws and carrying out its punishments.

He became furious the day a man came to him and said, "I always come late to *ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ* (i.e., *fajr* prayer), because of so-and-so who always makes the prayer too lengthy." The Prophet (SAAS) was never seen as angry in his rebuke as he was on that day. He said: "O people, there are among you those who put others off from good deeds. When anyone leads the people in prayer, he should keep it short, for behind him are the old, the young, and the one who has a pressing need." [Agreed upon]

He also became angry the day he returned from a journey and found a thin curtain covered with pictures in 'Ā'ishah's house. When he saw it, he tore it down and his face reddened. He told her: "O 'Ā'ishah, the people who will be most severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be those who imitate the creation of Allah." [Agreed upon]

He also became angry when Usāmah ibn Zayd spoke to him concerning the Makhzūmī woman who had committed theft, and the Prophet (SAAS) had decreed that the punishment be carried out on her. The people said, "Who will speak to the Prophet (SAAS) about her?" Then they said, "Who dares to do this but Usāmah ibn Zayd, his beloved?" So Usāmah spoke to him, and the Prophet (SAAS) said angrily, "Are you interceding to stop one of the punishments ordained by Allah?" Then he got up and addressed the people: "The people who came before you were destroyed because when one of their noblemen committed theft, they let him off, but when one of the weak among them committed theft, then they would carry out the punishment on him. By Allah,

if Fāṭimah the daughter of Muhammad were to commit theft, I would cut off her hand." [Agreed upon]

Such was the anger of the Prophet (SAAS), and these are the valid reasons for anger according to Islam. Anger should be for the sake of Allah, not people.

He avoids cursing and foul language

When the Muslim has adopted this attitude towards anger (i.e. his anger is only for the sake of Allah), then it is natural for his tongue to refrain from uttering curses and foul language. What reinforces this attitude and keeps him from swearing is his sincere adherance to the moral guidance of Islam, which discourages him from cursing, swearing and using bad language in such a way that the Muslim cannot even bear to hear such words.

Abu Mas'ūd (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Cursing a Muslim is a sin and killing him is *kufr*.'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Verily Allah does not love anyone who is foul-mouthed and obscene."[1]

> "Verily Allah will be angry with the disgusting, foul-mouthed person."[2]

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *thiqāt*.

[2]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *thiqāt*

> "The believer is not a person who hurts others with words, or curses, or swears, or is foul-mouthed."[1]

These are not qualities that befit the Muslim who has absorbed the teachings of Islam. He is far above all that, and the gap increases every time he understands more of the beautiful example of the Prophet (SAAS), who never uttered a word in his life that could offend, hurt people's feelings, or damage their honour.

Anas (RA) said: "The Prophet (SAAS) never used foul language, or cursed, or swore. When he wanted to rebuke someone, he would say, 'What is wrong with him? May his forehead be covered with dust![2]'" [al-Bukhārī]

He even refrained from cursing the *kāfirīn* who had hardened their hearts to his message. He never spoke a harmful word to them, as the great *Ṣaḥābī* Abū Hurayrah said: "It was said, 'O Messenger of Allah, pray against the *muskrikīn*.' He said, 'I was not sent as a curse, but I was sent as a mercy.'" [Muslim]

Abū Hurayrah said:

> "A man drank wine, so he was brought to the Prophet (SAAS) and he told the people to beat him. So some of us began to beat him with our hands and shoes, or cloaks. When the man left, some people said, 'May Allah put you to shame!' The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Do not say this. Do not help the Shayṭān against him.'" [al-Bukhārī]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]i.e., may he perform many sujūd (prostrations in prayer). [Author]

What a compassionate, merciful, humane attitude, even towards one who was stumbling about in the labyrinth of error and disobedience!

The Prophet (SAAS) excelled in removing the roots of evil, hatred and enmity in people's hearts when he described to the Muslims the awful destiny of the one who gives his tongue free rein in slandering others. He will find that all his nasty, cheap insults and attacks will cancel out whatever good deeds he may have done in his life, and he will be utterly ruined, with no protection from the Fire on that terrible Day.

The Prophet (SAAS) said: "Do you know who is the one who is ruined?" They said, "It is the one who has no money or possessions." He said, "The one who is ruined among my *ummah* is the one who comes on the Day of Resurrection with prayer, fasting and *zakāt* to his credit, but he insulted this one, slandered that one, devoured this one's wealth, shed that one's blood, and beat that one. So some of his *hasanāt* will be given to this one and some to that one . . . And if his *hasanāt* run out before all his victims have been compensated, then some of their sins will be taken and added to his, then he will be thrown into Hell." [Muslim]

Not surprisingly, therefore, all this nonsense is eliminated from the life of the true Muslims. Disputes and arguments which could lead to curses and insults are rare in a truly Islamic community where these values prevail and these sublime moral guidelines govern the life of the people.

The individual in a true Islamic society feels strongly that he is accountable for every word that he utters. If the problems of life lead him to some of these arguments, he controls his temper and

is careful with his words, remembering the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whatever two people who are insulting one another say, it is a sin on the one who started it, unless the one who was wronged steps beyond the bounds of self-defence." [Muslim]

So the Muslim holds his tongue and refrains from insults even if he is provoked, and he controls his anger lest he fall into sin. He is careful not to be the aggressor.

This attitude of the Muslim extends even to the dead: he does not speak against them as some ignorant people do, those who not only insult the living but extend their enmity towards the dead too. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Do not speak ill of the dead. They will get what they have earned in this life." [al-Bukhārī]

He does not falsely accuse anyone of *fisq*[1] or *kufr*

The Muslim who is restraining his tongue from insults, curses and foul language will also protect himself from falling into something even worse than that, namely making unfounded accusations of *fisq* and *kufr*. The Prophet (SAAS) promised that if a person accused innocent people of such things, his accusations would rebound on him and he would have to carry the heavy burden of sin:

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[1] *Fisq*: an Arabic word which encompasses the meanings of immorality, rebellion, transgression, perversion, impiety, etc. [Translator]

"No man accuses another of *fisq* or *kufr*, but it rebounds on him if the accused was not as he said." [al-Bukhārī]

He is modest and discreet

Another characteristic of the Muslim is that he is modest and discreet, and does not like to broadcast scandal in the Muslim community. This is in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah which warn those wrongdoers who enjoy slandering people's honour and talking about their hidden faults of the most severe punishment in this world and next:

"Those who love (to see) scandal published broadcast among the Believers, will have a grievous penalty in this life and in the Hereafter . . ." [*al-Nūr* 24:19]

The one who gives his tongue free rein in spreading scandal in the community is as great a sinner as the one who commits a scandalous deed. 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (RA) said: "The one who says something scandalous and the one who passes it on are equally sinful."[1]

The individual in an Islamic society is discreet and modest. He rises above all these insignificant matters, and has the strength of character, thanks to the teachings of Islam, to resist slandering people and to refrain from announcing sin, whether it be his own sin or something he has heard or seen on the part of others. He heeds the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

> "Every member of my *ummah* is fine, except for those who broadcast sins. An example of this is man who does something at night, then in the morning, when Allah has concealed his sin, he tells someone, 'O so-and-so, I did such-and-such last night.' His sin has been concealed all night by his Lord, but in the morning he exposes that which Allah had concealed.'" [Agreed upon]

> "No man conceals the sin of another in this world, but Allah will cover him on the Day of Resurrection." [Muslim]

Some people came to 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir and said: "We have neighbours who drink and do such-and-such. Should we tell the ruler about them?" He said, "No, for I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'Whoever sees a Muslim's fault and covers it up, it will be as if he brought back to life a baby girl who had been buried alive.'"[1]

Human weakness will not be successfully dealt with by seeking out and broadcasting people's faults, but by explaining things to them properly, encouraging obedience and discouraging wrongdoing, without being harsh or confrontational. A gentle approach softens hearts and opens minds. Therefore Islam forbade people to spy on one another or to look for Muslims' faults. Allah said:

> **". . . And spy not on each other . . ."** [*al-Hujurāt* 49:12]

Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) reported that a man was brought to him and he was told: "This man's beard is dripping with wine." He said, "We

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

have been forbidden to spy on one another, but if something becomes apparent, we will take it as evidence."[1]

Seeking out the faults of Muslims, spying on them, and exposing and broadcasting their weaknesses and shortcomings, hurts the person to whom these things are done, and consequently harms the larger community in which he lives. For slander and accusations do not spread in a community, but it leads to disintegration and immorality: sin is taken lightly, malice is rife, conspiracies abound, hatred prevails, and corruption is widespread. The Prophet (SAAS) referred to this:

> "If you seek out the faults of the Muslims, you will corrupt them, or you will nearly corrupt them."[2]

So the Prophet (SAAS) issued a stern warning to the Muslims against the danger of slandering people's honour and exposing their faults. He threatened that the one who takes such matters lightly would himself be exposed, even if he were hiding in the innermost part of his home:

> "Do not hurt the feelings of the servants of Allah; do not embarrass them; do not seek to expose their faults. Whoever seeks to expose the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will seek to expose his faults and expose him, even if he hides in the innermost part of his home."[3]

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[1]Reported by Abu Dāwud with an *isnād* that is acceptable according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[2]Reported by Aḥmad; the men of its *isnād* are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

[3]Reported by Aḥmad; the men of its *isnād* are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

A report from Ibn 'Abbās shows the anger of the Prophet (SAAS) and his harshness towards those who slandered the honour of others:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) gave a speech that even reached the ears of virgins in their private rooms. He said, 'O you who have spoken the words of faith, but faith has not penetrated your hearts! Do not hurt the feelings of the believers and do not seek out their faults. Whoever seeks out the faults of his Muslim brother, Allah will seek out his faults, and whoever's faults are sought out by Allah will be exposed, even if he is in the innermost part of his house.'"[1]

The Prophet's severity towards those who thought little of slandering the honour of others caused him to address them as "you who have spoken the words of faith, but faith has not penetrated your hearts." How great is the sin of those who are included among those whose hearts are deprived of the blessing of faith. It is a great sin, but they take it lightly, whilst in the sight of Allah it is a most serious matter.

He does not interfere in that which does not concern him

The smart Muslim who is concerned with the level of his Islam and seeks to attain the pleasure of his Lord, does not interfere with that which does not concern him, or stick his nose into other people's private business, nor does he indulge in empty arguments about rumours and who said what. He tries to avoid all that, believing that he is adopting the dignified Islamic attitude that raises men above all these futile arguments and vain talk:

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī; the men of its *isnād* are *thiqāt*.

> "A sign of a person's being a good Muslim is that he should leave alone that which does not concern him."[1]

Abu Hurayrah (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Allah likes three things for you and dislikes three things. He likes for you to worship Him, not to associate anything with Him, and to hold fast, altogether, by the Rope which He (stretches out for you), and not to be divided among yourselves [cf. *Āl 'Imrān* 3:103]. And He dislikes for you to pass on stories and gossip; to ask too many questions; and to waste money." [Muslim]

The divinely-guided society which has been formed by Islam has no room for passing on stories and gossip, asking too many questions, or interfering in the private affairs of others, because the members of such a society are too busy with something much more important, which is the establishing of the word of Allah on earth, taking the banner of Islam to the four corners of the earth, and spreading its values among mankind. Those who are engaged in such great missions do not have the time to indulge in such sins.

He refrains from backbiting and slander

Therefore the Muslim keeps away from backbiting and gossip. Because of his upbringing and education in the values and attitudes of Islam, he is too busy with the important things in life to be concerned with such trivial matters. He always adheres to the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, following what they command and avoiding what they prohibit.

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; the men of its *isnād* are *thiqāt*.

When he reads the words of Allah:

> **". . . Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it . . . But fear Allah, for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful,"** [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:12]

his heart is filled with revulsion towards backbiting, because he sees this image of the one who backbites as being like the one who eats his dead brother's flesh. So he hastens to repent, as Allah commands at the end of the *āyah*, encouraging the one who has fallen into the error of backbiting to repent quickly from it.

The true Muslim also heeds the words of the Prophet (SAAS) when he was asked, "Which of the Muslims is the best, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "The one from whose tongue and whose hand the Muslims are safe." [Agreed upon]

In accordance with this sublime, wise guidance, the true Muslum does not engage in backbiting, nor does he stretch forth his hand to harm anyone in his community. Nor does he stop there: he fights backbiting wherever he finds it. So he defends his Muslim brother in his absence, when the gossiping tongues mention him, and he refutes the bad things that others say, in adherence to the guidance of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whoever defends the honour of his brother from slander, it will be his right that Allah will defend him from the Fire."[1]

[1]Reported by Ahmad with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

The true Muslim does not spread malicious gossip in his community, because he knows, from his understanding of Islam, that this will place him in that group of evil people whose only conern is to cause trouble between others and break the ties of close love between close friends. Asmā' bint Yazīd reported:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Shall I not tell you who are the best among you?' They said, 'Of course, O Messenger of Allah.' He said, 'Those who, when they are seen, Allah is remembered (i.e., they are very pious).' Then he said, 'Shall I not tell you of the worst among you? Those who spread malicious gossip, cause trouble between friends, and seek out the faults of good people.'"[1]

The person who engages in malicious gossip is soundly condemned in this world, and is warned of a terrible fate in the Hereafter, in the words of the definitive *hadīth* which in effect closes every door of hope to him, if he persists in his error:

> "The one who engages in malicious gossip will not enter Paradise." [Agreed upon]

What fills the heart with fear and terror of the consequences of malicious gossip is the fact that the punishment of Allah will befall the one who engaged in this sin from the time he is placed in his grave. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others report from Ibn 'Abbās:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) passed by two graves, and said, 'They are being punished, but they are not being punished for any major sin. One

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[1]Reported by Ahmad with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*

of them used to spread malicious gossip, and the other used not to clean himself properly after urinating.'" He (Ibn 'Abbās) said: "He called for a green branch and split it in two, then he planted one piece on each grave and said, 'May their punishment be reduced so long as these remain fresh.'"

He avoids giving false statements

One of the attributes of the true Muslim is that he does not give false statements, because to do so is *ḥarām*:

> **". . . and shun the word that is false."** [*al-Ḥajj* 22:30]

Bearing false witness[1], besides being *ḥarām*, does not befit a Muslim's manhood, and it damages his credibility and honour. As such, it cannot be one of the attributes of the believers. Hence Allah forbade it to His chosen servants, as He forbade other major sins:

> **"Those who witness no falsehood and, if they pass by futility, they pass it by with honourable (avoidance)."** [*al-Furqān* 25:72]

Among the indications of the enormity of this sin is the fact that the Prophet (SAAS) mentioned it as coming after the two most serious sins on the scale of major sins: associating partners with

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[1] *Shahādat al-zūr* may be interpreted in the following ways: bearing false witness by giving evidence that is false; assisting in something which implies fraud or falsehood; attending the gatherings of the *kuffār* on the occasion of their festivals. [Translator]

Allah, and disobedience to parents. Then he repeated it to the Muslims, warning them with the utmost fervour. He said:

> "Shall I not tell you of the most serious of the major sins?" We said: "Of course, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "Associating anything with Allah, and disobeying parents." He was reclining, but then he sat up and said: "and bearing false witness," and he kept repeating this until we wished that he would stop (i.e., so that he would not exhaust himself with his fervour).
> [Agreed upon]

He avoids suspicion

Another attribute of the true Muslim is that he does not think badly of people or allow his imagination to run riot dreaming up accusations against innocent people. This is in accordance with the words of the Qur'ān:

> **"O you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin . . ."** [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:12]

The Prophet (SAAS) issued a stern warning against suspicion and speculation that has no foundation in reality. He said:

> "Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the falsest of speech." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) counted suspicion as being the falsest of speech. The truly sincere Muslim would never even allow words that carry the stench of untruth to cross his tongue, so how could

he allow himself to fall into the trap of uttering the falsest of speech?

When the Prophet (SAAS) warned Muslims against suspicion and called it the falsest of speech, he was directing Muslims to take people at face value, and to avoid speculating about them or doubting them. It is not the attitude of a Muslim, nor is it his business, to uncover people's secrets, to expose their private affairs, or to slander them. Only Allah knows what is in people's hearts, and can reveal it or call them to account for it, for only He knows all that is secret and hidden. A man, in contrast, knows nothing of his brother except what he sees him do. This was the approach of the *Ṣaḥābah* who received guidance, pure and unadulterated, from the Prophet (SAAS).

'Abdul-Razzāq reported from 'Abdullah ibn 'Utbah ibn Mas'ūd: "I heard 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) say: 'There are people who used to follow the *waḥy* (revelation) at the time of the Prophet (SAAS), but now the *waḥy* has stopped. So now we take people at face value. If someone appears good to us, we trust him and form a close relationship with him on the basis of what we see of his deeds. We have nothing to do with his inner thoughts, which are for Allah to judge. And if someone appears bad to us, we do not trust him or believe him, even if he tells us that his inner thoughts are good.'"[1]

So the true Muslim is careful about the words he says and the judgements he makes about people. He never forgets the words of Allah:

> **"And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of**

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[1] *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 2/151

seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).”
[*al-Isrā'* 17:36]

The Muslim abides by this wise prohibition. He does not speak except with knowledge, and he does not form judgements except with certainty. His horror of falling into the sin of indulging in slander and suspicion increases when he imagines the stern angel appointed to keep watch over him, who will keep count of every word he utters:

“Not a word does he utter, but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it).” [*Qāf* 50:18]

The Muslim who truly understands these teachings will tremble with fear at the thought of the responsibility he bears for every word he utters. So he is always reserved in his speech, thinking about every word before he says it, because he knows that these words may raise him to a position where Allah is pleased with him, or they may earn him His wrath. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> “A man could utter a word that pleases Allah, and not realize the consequences of it, for Allah may decree that he is pleased with him because of it until the Day he meets Him. Similarly, a man could utter a word that angers Allah, and not realize the consequences of it, for Allah may decree that He is angry with him because of it until the Day of Resurrection.”[1]

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[1]Reported by Imām Mālik in *al-Muwatta'*.

How great is our responsibility for the words we utter! How serious are the consequences of the words that our garrulous tongues speak so carelessly!

The true Muslim who is pure of heart does not listen to people's idle talk, or pay attention to the rumours and speculation that are rife in our communities nowadays. Consequently, he never allows himself to pass on whatever he hears of such rumours without being sure that they are true. He believes that to do so would be the kind of *ḥarām* lie that was clearly forbidden by the Prophet (SAAS):

> "It is enough lying for a man to repeat everything he hears." [Muslim]

He keeps secrets

Another characteristic of the true Muslim is that he keeps secrets and does not disclose anything that has been entrusted to him. Keeping secrets is a sign of manhood, and of strength of character. This was the attitude of the best men and women of Islam, those who had been truly guided by its teachings. This was one of their best and most prominent characteristics.

The attitude of Abu Bakr and 'Uthmān towards 'Umar when he offered them his daughter Ḥafṣah's hand in marriage after she was widowed, and their concealing the secret of the Prophet (SAAS) from him, offer clear evidence of the importance placed by the prominent *Ṣaḥābah* on the virtue of keeping secrets, and their determination to adhere to it.

Imam al-Bukhārī reports from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar that 'Umar said, concerning events after his daughter Ḥafṣah was widowed: "I met 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (RA) and offered him Ḥafṣah's hand

in marriage. I said, 'If you wish, I will marry Ḥafṣah to you.' He said, 'I will think about it.' A few days passed, then he met me and said, 'I think that I do not wish to get married just now.' Then I met Abu Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (RA) and said, 'If you wish, I will marry Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar to you.' Abu Bakr remained silent and made no reply to me, and I was more upset with him than with 'Uthmān. A few days passed, then the Prophet (SAAS) asked for her hand, and I gave her to him in marriage. Abu Bakr met me and said, 'Perhaps you are angry with me for when you offered me Ḥafṣah's hand and I did not reply?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Nothing kept me from answering you except the fact that I knew the Prophet (SAAS) had mentioned her, and I could not disclose the secret of the Messenger of Allah (SAAS). If he had decided not to marry her, then I would have married her.'"

The virtue of keeping secrets was not confined only to the men of the *salaf*, it also included women and children whose hearts were filled with the guidance of Islam. We see this in the report given by Imām Muslim from Anas (RA), who said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) came to me while I was playing with some other boys. He greeted us, then sent me on an errand. I was late coming home to my mother, and when I came, she said, 'What kept you so long?' I said, 'The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) sent me on an errand.' She asked me, 'What errand?' I said, 'It is a secret.' She said, 'Do not tell anyone the secret of the Messenger of Allah (SAAS).' Anas said: By Allah, if I had told anyone about it, I would have told you, O Thābit."[1]

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[1]Reported by Muslim; a slightly shortened version was reported by al-Bukhārī. Thābit is the great *Ṣaḥābī* who reported this *ḥadīth* from Anas. [Author]

Umm Anas saw that her son was keen to keep the secret entrusted to him by the Prophet (SAAS), so she reinforced this keen attitude by telling him not to disclose this secret to anyone. So Anas did not speak of it to anyone, not even the great *Sahābī* Thābit ibn Qays, who was the spokesman of the Prophet (SAAS), and one of those who were promised Paradise. She did not allow her curiosity to make her quiz her young son about the secret he was keeping from her. This is true Islamic *tarbiyah* (education, upbringing), and this is the sublime level to which it raised men, women and children alike.

Telling secrets is one of the worst habits a man could have, because not everything that is known is to be spoken about in this life. There are certain matters that dictate discretion, dignity and a sense of honour, matters that should be kept secret, especially when they concern marital life. No-one tells others about such matters except the one who has some measure of madness, or who is somewhat unstable, dirty and stupid. Therefore those who talk too much are included among those who are evil, indeed they are the most evil of people in the sight of Allah, as the Prophet (SAAS) explained:

> "The most evil of people in the sight of Allah on the Day of Judgement will be a man who was intimate with his wife, then went and told others about her secrets." [Muslim]

He does not converse privately with another person when there is a third person present

The Muslim who understands his religion is sensitive and aware. He respects the feelings of others and avoids hurting them. Therefore he has good manners when he speaks to them, and among these good manners is not speaking privately to another

when a third person is present. This is one of the most important of the good manners which Islam instils in its followers, as is stated in the *hadīth* of Ibn Mas'ūd (RA) in which the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "If you are three, two should not converse privately to the exclusion of the other, until more people join you, because that will make him sad." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim whose solid grounding in Islamic teaching has given him intelligence, sensitivity and good manners, avoids whispering and conversing privately when he is in a group of no more than three people. He is careful not to hurt the feelings of the third person, lest he feel excluded and offended. If there is an urgent need for two of them to converse privately, then they must ask the permission of the third person, speak briefly, then apologize to him.

The *Sahābah*, whose lives and manners were completely permeated with the teachings and morals of Islam, never ignored these sensitive issues in their dealings with people. This is reflected in many reports which describe their careful respect for human feelings. An example is the report given by Imam Mālik in *al-Muwatta'*, from 'Abdullah ibn Dīnār who said:

> "Ibn 'Umar and I were at the house of Khālid ibn 'Uqbah, which was in the market, when a man came in wanting to speak to him (Ibn 'Umar) in private. I was the only other person present, so Ibn 'Umar called another man to make our number up to four. Then he told me and the newcomer, 'Move a little way off together, for I heard the

Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say, "Two should not converse privately to the exclusion of another.""'"

Ibn 'Umar did not want to listen to a man who had come in off the street suddenly to converse with him in private, because he knew that there was a third person present whose feelings could be hurt if he asked him to move away on his own. He waited to listen to the man who wanted to converse in private, until he had called a fourth man, then he explained to all of them that this was the *sunnah* of the Prophet (SAAS), and repeated the *ḥadīth* to them, reminding the Muslims that this is the approach they should take when they find themselves in such situations, respecting people's feelings and following the *sunnah* of the Prophet (SAAS).

He is not arrogant or proud

The true Muslim is not arrogant; he does not look down his nose at people, think that he is better than them, or puff himself up with pride. The guidance of the Qur'ān, which has filled his heart and soul, warns the arrogant that if they enjoy strutting proudly and puffing themselves up in this transient world, then they will lose out in the eternal Hereafter, which Allah has denied to the arrogant:

> **"That House of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the End is (best) for the righteous."** [*al-Qaṣaṣ* 28:83]

The Qur'ān also tells him that Allah does not love those who arrogantly boast and strut about puffing themselves up with pride:

"And swell not your cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth: for Allah loves not any arrogant boaster."
[*Luqmān* 31:18]

The *ahādīth* texts pay an amazing amount of attention to eliminating pride from people's hearts by forbidding it, deterring them from it and warning those who are affected by it that they stand to lose their Hereafter for the sake of an atom's weight of pride that the Shaytān has placed in their hearts. They will be denied entry to Paradise, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

"No-one will enter Paradise who has an atom's-weight of pride in his heart." A man asked, "What if a man likes his clothes and his shoes to look good?" He said, "Allah is beautiful and loves beauty (i.e., wanting to look good is not pride or arrogance). Pride is denying the truth and despising people." [Muslim]

Hārithah ibn Wahb (RA) said:

"I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: "Shall I not tell you about the people of Hell-fire? Every one who is harsh, proud, disdainful and arrogant." [Agreed upon]

It is sufficient humiliation for the arrogant in the Hereafter that Allah will not look at them or praise them on the Day of Resurrection, as just recompense for their arrogant behaviour on earth. This is a moral humiliation which is no less painful for sensitive souls than the physical punishment in Hell. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at those who let their garments trail on the ground out of arrogance." [Agreed upon]

> "There are three whom Allah will not speak to, or praise, or look at on the Day of Resurrection, and they will have a severe punishment: an old man who commits adultery, a king who tells lies, and a poor man who is arrogant." [Muslim]

Pride is one of the divine attributes and weak human creatures have no right to it. Those who are arrogant and proud transgress into the realm of the divine, vying with the Almighty Creator for one of His sublime attributes, so they deserve the severe punishment which the Prophet (SAAS) referred to:

> "Allah says: 'Might is My cloak and pride is My garment. Whoever vies with Me for either of them, I will punish him.'" [Muslim]

Many *aḥādīth* warn the believers against being tempted by pride at moments of human weakness. The Prophet (SAAS) used various methods to warn them so that the pious believers would be protected from the awful disease of arrogance. For example:

> "Whoever thinks highly of himself, or walks with an arrogant attitude, will meet Allah when He is angry with him."[1]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

He is humble and modest

Complementing these *aḥādīh* which forbid pride and warn the arrogant of the worst kind of humiliation and punishment, other *aḥādīh* encourage modesty and humility, reminding those who possess these virtues that as long as they continue to be humble towards one another in obedience to Allah's commands, Allah will raise their status. For example, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "No-one is humble for the sake of Allah, but Allah will raise him in status." [Muslim]

> "Allah told me that you should be so humble towards one another that no-one should boast to anyone else and no-one should oppress anyone." [Muslim]

The Prophet's life is a practical, living example of humility, gentleness and tolerance. Whenever he passed a group of children playing, his position as Prophet and the great status which Allah had bestowed on him alone did not prevent him from greeting those children, smiling at them and exchanging a few words with them. Anas (RA) said that he passed by a group of children and greeted them. He added, "The Prophet (SAAS) used to do that." [Agreed upon]

Anas (RA) gave another account of the Prophet's humility: he reported that one of the slave-women of Madīnah used to take the Prophet's hand and lead him wherever she wanted, until he had sorted out her needs. [al-Bukhārī]

Tamīm ibn Usayd came to Madīnah to ask about the rules of Islam. He was a stranger, but he did not find any barrier or guard between him and the Prophet (SAAS), the first man in the Islamic

state, who was on the *minbar* addressing the people. Tamīm came forward to ask some questions, and the Prophet (SAAS) welcomed him with all warmth, humility and compassion. Tamīm tells the story, as was related by Imam Muslim:

> "I came to the Prophet (SAAS) whilst he was giving a speech. I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, a stranger has come to ask about his religion, he does not know what his religion is.' The Prophet (SAAS) welcomed me, interrupted his speech, and came to me. A chair was brought for him, so he sat down and began to teach me from what Allah had taught him. Then he resumed his speech and finished what he was saying."

The Prophet (SAAS) used to instil the attitude of humility, based on tolerance, gentleness and a good nature, in the hearts of his Companions. He said:

> "If I were to be invited to a simple meal of a sheep's foot or leg, or if I were to be offered this food as a gift, I would accept." [al-Bukhārī]

This is modesty in its purest form and human greatness of the highest degree.

He does not make fun of anyone

The Muslim whose personality has been infused with a love of humility will be the least likely to despise people or make fun of them, because the Qur'ānic guidance which has instilled this modesty and aversion to arrogance in him, has at the same time forbidden him to make fun of people or despise them:

> **"O you who believe! Let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: ill-seeking is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: and those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong."**
> [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:11]

The Prophet (SAAS) explained that for a Muslim to despise his brother is pure evil:

> "It is sufficient evil for a man to despise his Muslim brother." [Muslim]

He respects elders and distinguished people

Islam urges the Muslims to respect people, not to despise them and look down on them, especially if they are deserving of respect. Indeed, respecting one's elders, scholars and distinguished people is counted as one of the most important of the basic attitudes which give the Muslim his identity in the Islamic society. Whoever lacks this quality forfeits his membership in this community and no longer has the honour of belonging to the *ummah* of Islam, as the Prophet (SAAS) stated:

> "He does not belong to my *ummah* who does not honour our elders, show compassion to our young ones, and pay due respect to our scholars."[1]

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[1]Reported by Aḥmad and al-Ṭabarānī; its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

Respect for elders and giving them priority over those who are younger, are indications of a community's or society's level of civility, of its members' understanding of the rules of human morality, and of their high level of good manners. Hence the Prophet (SAAS) was keen to reinforce this understanding in the hearts of the Muslims, whilst he was raising the structure of the Islamic society. Among the evidence of his concern to achieve this are his words to 'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn Sahl, who was speaking although he was the youngest member of the delegation that had come to the Prophet (SAAS). The Prophet (SAAS) told him, "Let someone who is older than you speak, let someone who is older than you speak." So Abdul-Raḥmān fell silent, and someone who was older than him spoke. [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) went to the furthest extent in honouring elders and those who are distinguished, by making this a part of worship. He said:

> "Part of glorifying Allah is honouring the grey-haired (i.e., older) Muslim, the one who has learnt the Qur'ān by heart without exaggerating about it or ignoring its teachings, and honouring the just ruler."[1]

This *tarbiyah* bore fruits in the hearts of the first generation of Muslims, and formed men who embodied these sublime morals and attitudes. They were a brilliant example of respect for elders and those who are distinguished. I mention by way of example Abu Sa'īd Samurah ibn Jundab (RA) who said:

> "At the time of the Prophet (SAAS), I was a young boy, and I used to learn a lot from him. The only

[1]A *hasan hadīth* reported by Abū Dāwūd.

> thing that prevents me from speaking is the fact that there are men here who are older than I." [Agreed upon]

Another example of respect to elders and those who are distinguished, which every Muslim needs to follow, is the story of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, who attended a gathering where the Prophet (SAAS), Abu Bakr and 'Umar were present. The Prophet (SAAS) asked a question to which Ibn 'Umar knew the answer, but he remained silent out of respect to Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Ibn 'Umar said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Tell me the name of a tree which is like the Muslim: it bears fruit at all times by the permission of its Lord, and never sheds its leaves.' I thought to myself, the date palm, but I did not like to speak, because Abu Bakr and 'Umar were there. When they did not speak, the Prophet (SAAS) said, 'It is the date palm.' When I left with my father, I said, 'O Father, I thought to myself that it was the date palm.' He said, 'What stopped you from saying so? If you had said it, it would have been dearer to me than such-and-such.' He said, 'Nothing stopped me except the fact that I did not see you and Abu Bakr speaking, so I did not like to speak.'" [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Islam gives the people in any society their rightful place, according to the commands of the Prophet (SAAS). Imam Muslim mentions this at the beginning of his *Saḥīḥ*, where he says:

"It was reported that 'Ā'ishah (RA) said, 'The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) ordered us to put people in their rightful positions.'"

Part of putting people in their rightful positions is respecting their talents and abilities, so the scholars, bearers of the Qur'ān, those who are wise and those who are distinguished are given precedence. The scholars enjoy this elevated, respected position in the Islamic society so long as they remain faithful to the *sharī'ah* of Allah, speak the truth, and defend Islam. Allah placed them in this high position when He said:

". . . Say: 'Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know? It is those who are endued with understanding that receive admonition.'" [*al-Zumar* 39:9]

The bearers of the Qur'ān also enjoy a high status in the Islamic community, as is described in a number of *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth*. They are leaders of prayers and are entitled to a position of prominence and respect in gatherings:

"A group of people should be led in prayer by the one who is most expert in reading the Book of Allah. If they are equal in their knowledge of the Qur'ān, then the one who is most knowledgeable about the *sunnah* should lead. If they are equal in knowledge of the *sunnah*, then the one who migrated first should lead. If they are equal with respect to migration (*hijrah*), then the oldest should lead. No man should lead another in prayer in his own place, or sit in his specific place in his house unless he is given permission to do so." [Muslim]

We have already quoted the *hadīth*, "Part of glorifying Allah is honouring the grey haired (i.e., older) Muslim, the one who has learnt the Qur'ān by heart without exaggerating about it or ignoring its teachings."[1] When the Prophet (SAAS) began to bury the martyrs at Uḥud, placing two in each grave, he would ask, "Which of them had memorized more Qur'ān?" If either of them was pointed out to him, he would place him in the grave first. [al-Bukhārī]

An example of the Prophet's marvellous wisdom in placing people in their rightful positions was his practice, when straightening the rows of worshippers before the prayer, of saying:

> "Let those among you who possess wisdom and insight stand in the row directly behind me." [Muslim]

This is wise guidance which is highly significant in its classification of people according to their status. The fact that men of wisdom were called to stand in the first row behind the Prophet (SAAS) indicated that they were in a position to deal with the affairs of the Muslims, each one according to his own abilities and particular skills.

According to a report narrated by al-Ḥasan from his father, the Prophet (SAAS) used to give priority to those who were distinguished, according to their level of religious knowledge. He would honour the noble men of every tribe, and appoint them as governors of the tribe.[2] His gatherings were filled with the élite of the believers, always ranked by their level of *taqwā*, and the extent

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[1]A *ḥasan hadīth* reported by Abū Dāwūd.

[2]In other words, when a tribe embraced Islam, he did not change the ruling structure [Translator].

to which they respected the old, showed compassion to the young, gave priority to those in need, and protected strangers.[1]

The true Muslim understands all this and applies it to his dealings with all people, especially those who are learned, distinguished, noble and pious.

He mixes with people of noble character

Among the characteristics of the true Muslim is his contact and close friendship with righteous people and his asking them to pray for him. He does not find it difficult to do so, no matter how high his own status and achievements, as he is obeying the words of Allah:

> **"And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face, and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this Life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds."** [al-Kahf 18:28]

Mixing with righteous people has a good effect on a person, raising his level of *taqwā*, improving his speech and behaviour, and increasing his understanding of religion and love of truth, until he himself becomes one of that group of righteous people. This is what the Arab poet described:

> "Mixing with people of noble character, you will
> be counted as one of them,

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[1]See *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1/21, 22, 23.

So do not take anyone else for a friend."

Musa (AS), the Prophet of Allah, followed the righteous servant so that he might learn from him, saying with all good manners and respect:

> **"May I follow you on the footing that you teach me something of the (Higher) Truth which you have been taught?"** [*al-Kahf* 18:66]

When the righteous servant answered:

> **"Verily, you will not be able to have patience with me!"** [*al-Kahf* 18:67]

Musa said, with all politeness and respect:

> **"You will find me, if Allah so will, (truly) patient: nor shall I disobey you in aught."** [*al-Kahf* 18:69]

The true Muslim does not take as close friends any but the best of people, because he understands, from the teachings of his religion, that people are like metals, some of which are precious and others are base, and that good is only attracted to good:

> "People are metals like gold and silver. The best of them at the time of *Jāhiliyyah* will be the best of them in Islam, if they truly understand. Souls are like conscripted soldiers, if they recognize one another, they will become friends, and if they dislike one another, they will go their separate ways." [Muslim]

The Muslim also knows from the teachings of his religion that friends are of two types: the righteous friend and the bad friend. The good friend is like the bearer of musk: when one sits with him, there is an atmosphere of relaxation, generosity, perfume and happiness. The bad friend is like the one who operates the bellows: when one sits with him, there is the heat of flames, smoke, stench and an atmosphere of gloom. The Prophet (SAAS) gave the best analogy of this:

> "The good companion and the bad companion are like the bearer of musk and the one who pumps the bellows. With the bearer of musk, either he will give you a share, or you will buy from him, or you will smell a pleasant scent from him; but with the one who pumps the bellows, either he will burn your clothes or you will smell a foul stench from him." [Agreed upon]

Therefore the *Ṣaḥābah* used to encourage one another to visit good people who would remind them of Allah and fill their hearts with fear of Allah, religious teaching and respect. Anas (RA) reported the following incident:

> "Abū Bakr said to 'Umar (RA), after the Prophet (SAAS) had died, 'Let us go and visit Umm Ayman[1] as the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to do.' When they reached her, she wept, so they asked her, 'Why do you weep? What is with Allah is better for the Prophet (SAAS) (than this world).'

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[1]Umm Ayman was the Prophet's nursemaid during his childhood. When he grew up, he gave her her freedom and married her to Zayd ibn Hārithah. He used to honour her and treat her with kindness and respect, and say, "Umm Ayman is my mother." [Author]

> She said, 'I am not weeping because I do not know that what is with Allah is better for the Prophet (SAAS). I am weeping because the Revelation from Heaven has ceased.' She moved them deeply with these words, and they began to weep with her." [Muslim]

In such gatherings, which the angels surround and which Allah shades with His mercy, a man's faith is strengthened, his heart cleansed and his soul purified, so that everything he does will be good for himself, his family and his society. This is what Islam seeks to achieve by its teachings, both on an individual and a collective level.

He strives for people's benefit and seeks to protect them from harm

The Muslim who has received a sound Islamic education is very concerned about the benefit and wellbeing of the people in his community, and their protection from harm. Because of his having been brought up on the principles of truth, goodness and virtue, he has become a positive and constructive element, and cannot bear to see an opportunity to do good pass by without making the most of it. He knows that doing good will lead to success:

> **". . . And do good: that you may prosper."** [*al-Ḥajj* 22:77]

He hastens to do good, confident in the knowledge that Allah will reward him for every step he takes in the way of doing good:

> "Every day on which the sun rises, settling a dispute fairly between two people is a *ṣadaqah* (act

of charity); helping a man to get up on his beast or load his goods onto it is a *ṣadaqah*; a good word is a *ṣadaqah*; every step taken towards prayer is a *ṣadaqah*; and removing something harmful from the road is a *ṣadaqah*." [Agreed upon]

How marvellous is this combination of the good deeds which the Muslim performs in his social life, and his going to the mosque to pray! Thus the Prophet (SAAS) confirmed, in this *hadīth*, that this religion came to reform all the affairs of man, in this world and the next: there is no distinction between religious and secular affairs, or between social life and spiritual life. From the Islamic point of view, all a man's deeds are acts of worship, so long as he always has the intention of doing them for the sake of Allah and earning His pleasure.

So the doors of goodness are open to the true Muslim and he can enter them whenever he wishes, seeking the abundant mercy of Allah and hoping to earn His bountiful reward.

Jābir (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

"A good deed is a *ṣadaqah*." [al-Bukhārī]

Abū Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

"A good word is a *ṣadaqah*." [al-Bukhārī]

The mercy of Allah descends on the one who submits himself to Allah and is sincere in his intention; as a result, he will be rewarded if he does a little of good deeds, or even if he does none, on the condition that he refrains from doing evil.

Abū Mūsā (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Every Muslim must give charity.' Someone asked, 'What if he finds he has nothing with which to give charity?' He said, 'Let him work with his two hands and benefit himself and give charity (from his earnings).' Someone said, 'What if he cannot do that?' He said, 'Let him help one who is in desperate need.' Someone said, 'What if he is not able to do that?' He said, 'Let him refrain from doing evil, and that will be an act of charity.'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) began this *ḥadīth* with the words, "Every Muslim must give charity," then he went on to list various types of good deeds and acts of kindness by means of which a Muslim may earn reward for doing charity. Charity is a duty on the Muslim, that is, he must undertake deeds that are socially constructive in his community. If he is unable to do so, or does not do so for any reason, then at least he can restrain his tongue and refrain from doing evil; in this, too, there is reward. Thus both his positive and negative aspects (i.e., what he does and what he does not do) will be directed towards the service of the truth upon which the Muslim society is built. The Muslim is "the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe." [al-Bukhārī]

Indeed, the Prophet (SAAS) considered that the best of the Muslims in an Islamic society was the one from whom good deeds were to be expected and from whose evil deeds the Muslims were safe. As Imām Aḥmad narrated, the Prophet (SAAS) stood up before some people who were seated and said:

> "Shall I tell you the best of you and the worst of you?" The people were silent, so he repeated it three times, then one man said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "The best of you is the one

from whom good deeds are expected, and from whose evil deeds people are safe; the worst of you is the one from whom good deeds are expected but from whose evil deeds people are not safe."

The Muslim does not introduce anything but good to his community. If he does not do this, then at least he refrains from evil and causing harm to others. The true Muslim is the one who constantly does good deeds and never does anything bad, because he always bears in mind the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

"None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim's liking for his brother what he likes for himself means that he is concerned for his well-being and with protecting him from harm. It also means something else, which distinguishes the individual in an Islamic society, namely his dedication and perseverance in serving his Muslim brothers, which is prompted by the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

"Allah will continue to help His servant as long as His servant continues to help his brother."[1]

"A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim: he does not oppress him or forsake him when he is oppressed. Whoever helps his brother, Allah will help him; whoever relieves a Muslim from some distress, Allah will relieve him of some of his distress on the Day of Resurrection; whoever covers (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will cover him on the Day of Resurrection." [Agreed upon]

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *thiqāt*.

> "Whoever relieves a believer of some of the distress of this world, Allah will relieve him of some of the distress of the Day of Resurrection, and whoever comes to the aid of one who is going through hardship, Allah will come to his aid in this world and the next." [Muslim]

Encouraging this spirit of co-operation in the Islamic society was so important that the Prophet (SAAS) deemed going to the aid of one's brother to be better than staying in seclusion (*i'tikāf*) for a lengthy period, as in the *hadīth* narrated by Ibn 'Abbās from the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whoever goes to the aid of his brother, it is better for him than his remaining in seclusion for ten years, and whoever spends one day in seclusion seeking the pleasure of Allah, Allah will place between him and the Fire three ditches, between each of which is a distance greater than that between the East and the West."[1]

Feeling annoyed and reluctant to help people although one is able to do so brings the threat of losing the blessings one enjoys, as in another *hadīth* narrated by Ibn 'Abbās, who said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Never does Allah bless a servant with abundant bounty, then some needs of the people are brought to his attention and he feels annoyed and reluctant to help them, but

[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsat*; its isnād is *jayyid*.

> that blessing will be exposed to the threat of loss.'"[1]

One of the clear pictures drawn by the *sahīh ahādīth* of the people of Paradise is that of a man who enjoyed its bounties because he removed a tree by the road that used to harm the Muslims whenever they passed by it. We find this in the *hadīth*:

> "I have seen a man who was enjoying the luxuries of Paradise because he removed a tree from the side of the road that used to harm the Muslims." [Muslim]

Protecting the Muslims from harm is the other side of the same coin. Whatever protects the Muslims from harm is like whatever brings them benefits: in both cases, their well-being is preserved, and both kinds of deeds will bring reward, and the mercy and pleasure of Allah. So the Prophet (SAAS) urged Muslims to do both: to do good and to protect from harm. This combination will be of immense benefit to the community, and will strengthen its bonds of love and friendship.

This wisdom regarding protecting the Muslims from harm is described in the *hadīth* of Abū Barzah who said:

> "I said, 'O Prophet of Allah, teach me something that I may benefit from.' He said, 'Remove anything harmful from the path of the Muslims'" [Muslim]. According to another report, Abū Barzah said: "'O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a deed that will admit me to Paradise." He (SAAS)

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī in *al-Awsat*; its isnād is *jayyid*.

said, "Remove anything harmful from the path of people." [Muslim, Aḥmad and Ibn Mājah]

What a highly-developed, civil community is the society that Islam has built and instilled in each of its members the idea that the good deeds which will bring one closer to Allah and admit one to Paradise include removing anything harmful from the path of the people! The Muslim society in which these sublime principles are alive and are abided by is no doubt one of the most civil societies on earth, and it would be unimaginable that anyone in such a society would throw hazardous litter, garbage and construction waste materials into the public streets as so many people do nowadays, for which the municipalities prosecute and fine them.

How great is the difference between the society which is guided by Islam, whose members hasten to remove anything harmful from the road in obedience to Allah's command and in hope of reward from Him, and the society which has deviated from the guidance of Allah, whose members do not care on whom their garbage lands when they throw it from their balconies, windows and rooftops!

The civilized Western world has managed to excel in such matters of organization by making individuals become accustomed to respecting the system and following it strictly. But this high level of social organization in the West still falls far short of the true Islamic ideal, for one good reason: the Muslim who has received a sound Islamic education is even stricter and more sincere in adhering to the system, because he believes that stepping beyond the limits is an act of disobedience towards Allah, Who will punish him on the Day **"whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart"** [*al-Shu'arā'* 26:88-89]. Moreover, the Westerner does not see anything seriously wrong with transgressing the bounds of the

system. His conscience may or may not trouble him, but there the matter ends, especially if the authorities are unaware of it.

He strives to reconcile between Muslims

Part of being concerned about the Muslims' welfare and protecting them from harm involves striving to reconcile between them if there is a dispute. The texts concerning reconciling between Muslims are too many to be quoted here, so we will look at just a few examples:

> **"If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight (all of you) against the one that transgresses until it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just)."**
> [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:9]

This is a decisive divine commandment to reconcile between two conflicting parties, even if it means fighting the group that is stubbornly transgressing, until justice and brotherhood once again prevail in the Muslim society:

> **"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that you may receive Mercy."** [*al-Ḥujurāt* 49:10]

The Propher (SAAS) himself used to strive to reconcile between conflicting parties, regardless of how busy he was with the heavy duties of *da'wah*, in order to confirm to the Muslims the obligation of bringing about such reconciliations. Abū'l-'Abbās

Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sā'idī (RA) reports, in a lengthy *ḥadīth* whose authenticity and soundness are agreed upon, that the Prophet (SAAS) heard that there were some disputes among the members of Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf, so he went out with some other people, to work towards a solution until it was time to pray.

The Prophet (SAAS) was deeply concerned that brotherhood should prevail in the Muslim society and the Muslim's lives should be filled with harmony, purity and mutual understanding. He never stopped encouraging them, through his words and deeds, to do good, and to be kind and tolerant. He paid a great deal of attention to this important aspect of Islamic education, until anger, disputes and stubbornness gave way to satisfaction, purity and tolerance. An example of this is given by 'Ā'ishah (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) heard voices raised in dispute outside the door, one of which was asking the other to let him off part of his debt and to be lenient with regard to what remained, but the other said, 'By Allah, I will never do that!' The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) went out and said, 'Where is the one who is swearing by Allah that he will never do a good deed?' The man felt intense shame when he heard the voice of the Messenger of Allah denouncing and rebuking him, so he gave up his claim, saying, 'It was I, O Messenger of Allah, but he can have whatever he wants.'" [Agreed upon]

In order to bring about this reconciliation between people, the Prophet (SAAS) used to permit saying many of the things that people tend to add in the hope of bringing disputing parties together and softening stony hearts. Such comments are not considered to be the kinds of lies that are *ḥarām*, and the one who

says them is not regarded as a liar or a sinner. We find evidence of this in the *hadīth* of Umm Kalthūm bint 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayt (RA), who said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'He is not a liar who reconciles between people by telling them good news or saying something good.'" [Agreed upon] In a report narrated by Muslim, she added: "I did not hear him permit anything of what people might say except in three cases." She meant: war, reconciling between people, and the speech of a man to his wife or a wife to her husband.

He calls people to the truth

The true Muslim is always active and lives for his *da'wah*. He does not wait for circumstances and events to motivate him to do good, rather he takes the initiative by himself to call people to the truth of Islam, seeking thereby the great reward which Allah has promised those who sincerely call others to the truth, as the Prophet (SAAS) said to 'Ali (RA):

> "By Allah, if Allah were to guide just one man through you it would be better for you than red camels." [Agreed upon]

A good word which the *dā'ī* says to the one who is lost and does not know the straight path, and thus plants the seed of guidance in his heart, will come back to him with a reward that is worth more than red camels, which were the most precious and sought-after wealth among the Arabs at that time. In addition, a reward like that of the ones who are guided at his hands will also be given to him, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

"Whoever calls people to the truth will have a reward like that of those who follow him, without it detracting in the least from their reward." [Muslim]

It is no wonder that the *dā'īs* are envied for their patience and good work for the sake of Allah, spending their money and time to call those who are lost and deviating from the true path. The Prophet (SAAS) referred to this favourable kind of envy:

"Do not wish to be like anyone except in two cases: a man to whom Allah has given wealth so he spends it freely in support of the truth; and a man to whom Allah has given wisdom, so he acts according to it and teaches it to others."
[Agreed upon]

The Muslim does not think little of whatever knowledge he has if he is calling others to Allah. It is sufficient for him to convey whatever he has learned of the truth, even if it is just one *āyah* from the Book of Allah. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to tell his Companions to do:

"Convey (knowledge) from me even if it is just one *āyah*..." [al-Bukhārī]

This is because whether or not a person is guided may depend on just one word of this *āyah* which will touch his heart and ignite the spark of faith, so that his heart and his life will be illuminated with the light of guidance, and he will be a new man.

The true Muslim is altruistic by nature, liking for his brother what he likes for for himself, and always having concern for the well-being of the Muslims. In this way he shows sincerity towards

Allah, His Messenger, the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk, as was mentioned in a *hadīth* quoted earlier (see page 163). Therefore his concern is not only the guidance of himself and his own family, but he also strives to spread the message among all people. He does not want Paradise only for himself and his family, but also for all of mankind, so he always calls people towards that which will lead them to Paradise and keep them away from the Fire of Hell. This is the attitude of the *dā'ī*, which distinguishes him from ordinary people. It is a noble and sublime attitude that deserves the praise and commendation of the Prophet (SAAS) in his *du'ā'*:

> "May Allah make his face shine, the one who hears something from us and conveys it as he hears it, for perhaps the one to whom it is conveyed will understand it better than the one who conveyed it."[1]

The Islamic society is one in which there is solidarity, and responsibility resides in the hearts of its members in the deepest sense. If the Muslims had really understood their responsibility towards Allah, and each individual had fulfilled his own responsibilities in his society, then the Muslims would never have declined or deviated as far from the guidance of Islam as is currently the case.

Hence Islam issues a stern warning to the one who has the means of making *da'wah* but fails to do so, and who conceals the knowledge that Allah has given him, making it a means of achieving promotion and making some temporary earthly gains:

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *hasan sahīh hadīth*.

> "Whoever pursues knowledge that should be sought purely for the sake of Allah, but only seeks it for some wordly gain, will never even smell the scent of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection."[1]

> "Whoever was asked about knowledge and concealed it, will be bridled with reins of fire on the Day of Resurrection."[2]

He enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil

One of the requirements of calling others to Allah is enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil (*al-amr bi 'l-ma'rūf wa 'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*), which the Muslim does carefully, with deliberation and wisdom. So he opposes evil and tries to uproot it with his hand (i.e., by taking physical action), if he is able to, provided that doing so will not lead to a greater *fitnah*; if he is not able to do this, then he speaks out against it and explains what it right; and if he is unable to do that, then he denounces it in his heart and prepares himself to eradicate it. This is in accordance with the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whoever of you sees an evil action, let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to do so, then with his tongue, and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart - and that is the weakest of faith." [Muslim]

When the Muslim enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil, he is in effect being sincere towards the Muslims, for religion is

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan hadīth*.

sincerity. If that is indeed the case, then he has no option but to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, in order to fulfil the definition of sincerity as stated by the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Religion is sincerity (*nasīhah*)." We asked, "To whom?" He said, "To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk." [Muslim]

This sincerity, and this enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong, lead the true Muslim to speak the truth openly in the face of the oppressor. If this *ummah* is to survive with dignity, pride and honour, then it depends on the existence of brave, free-spirited men who are not afraid to stand up to oppression. If the *ummah* lacks such people then it is doomed, according to the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "If you see my *ummah* afraid to confront an oppressor and tell him, 'You are an oppressor,' then it is finished."[1]

Many *ahādīth* seek to inspire the Muslim to do heroic deeds in opposing falsehood, assuring him that such heroism will not diminish his *rizq* or shorten his life:

> "The fear of people should never prevent any of you from speaking the truth when he sees it or pointing out its importance. Doing so will not hasten one's appointed time of death or lessen one's *rizq*."[2]

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[1]Reported by Ahmad; its men are *rijāl al-sahīh*.

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *hasan sahīh hadīth*.

A man stood up whilst the Prophet (SAAS) was on the *minbar* and asked: "O Messenger of Allah, which of the people is the best?" He said, "The best of the people are those are most well-versed in Qur'ān, those who are most pious, those who most enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and those who are most respectful towards their relatives."[1]

Because the principle of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil was a basic principle on which the Islamic society was founded, this instilled courage in the hearts of the Muslims so that they would take a stand against falsehood and come to the aid of the oppressed. The Prophet's (SAAS) teaching reinforced this noble, heroic attitude and confirmed that Allah would support those heroes who defended the truth, and would condemn those cowards who remained silent:

> "No man forsakes a Muslim at a time when his honour is attacked and his sanctity is being violated, but Allah will forsake him at the time when he desires His help. And no man comes to the aid of a Muslim at a time when his honour is attacked and his sanctity is being violated, but Allah will come to his aid at the time when he desires His help."[2]

The true Muslim is a man with a mission. He never remains silent about falsehood or fails to uphold the truth. He is not content to let oppression and wrongdoing spread in his society, or for evil to prevail in his community. He is always striving to oppose evil and to avert the punishment of Allah which may befall all those

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Tabarānī; Ahmad's men are *thiqāt*.

[2]Reported by Ahmad and Abū Dāwūd with a *hasan isnād*.

cowards who are keeping silent and doing nothing, as Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq reported from the Prophet (SAAS). When Abu Bakr (RA) became the *khalīfah*, he ascended the *minbar*, praised Allah, then said, "O people, you recite the *āyah*, **'O you who believe! Guard your own souls: if you follow (right) guidance no hurt can come to you from those who stray . . .'** [*al-Mā'idah* 5:105] and you are misinterpreting it. Verily I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'Those people who see some evil and do not oppose it or seek change will shortly all be punished by Allah.'"[1]

The Muslim who is sincere in his Islam and whose faith is strong, is the furthest removed from vacillation, negativity and carelessness. He does not take matters of religion lightly, or neglect to enjoin what is good. He does not accept or become resigned to evil, and he never ceases to denounce it and oppose it as much as he is able. Religion is no joke: it is a serious matter, and there can be no compromise when it comes to *'aqīdah*. The Prophet (SAAS) warned us against ending up like the Jews, who vacillated and became careless with regard to their religion, so that the anger of Allah befell them, as is stated in the *ḥadīth* reported by Abū Mūsā from the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Among the people who came before you, the children of Israel, if any one of them did wrong, one of them would denounce him so that he could say that he had done his duty, but the next day he would sit and eat with him as if he had never seen him do anything wrong the day before. When Allah saw this attitude of theirs, he turned the hearts of some of them against others and cursed them by the tongue of Dāwūd and 'Īsā ibn Maryam, because they disobeyed and persisted in

[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*.

excesses [cf. *al-Mā'idah* 5:78]. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you must enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil, and you must stay the hand of the wrongdoer and give him a stern warning to adhere to the truth, otherwise Allah will surely turn the hearts of some of you against others, and curse you as He has cursed them."[1]

He is wise and eloquent in his *da'wah*

The *dā'ī* is intelligent and eloquent in his preaching, wise in the way he calls people to the truth, and gentle in the way he teaches them the rules of Islam. In all of this, he is following the words of Allah:

> **"Invite (all) to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching . . ."**
> [*al-Naḥl* 16:125]

One of the most important qualities of those who call others to Allah is that they should know how to reach people's hearts and endear faith to them, without saying anything that may turn them away, hurt them or offend them. So the *dā'ī* does not impart all his knowledge in one go; rather, he presents his knowledge in stages, and avoids overwhelming his audience or boring them. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do in his own preaching, as the great *Ṣaḥābī* 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA) tells us. He used to preach a little at a time to the people, every Thursday. A man said to him, "I wish that you would teach us every day." He said, "What prevents me from doing so is the fact that I would hate to bore you. I show consideration towards you by choosing a suitable

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

time to teach you, just as the Prophet (SAAS) used to do with us, for fear of making us bored." [Agreed upon]

One of the Prophet's effective methods in *da'wah* was not to make his *khuṭbah* too long, especially when he was addressing a large crowd which included elderly and sick people. Keeping the *khuṭbah* short is an indication of the *khaṭīb's* understanding both of his message and of the psychology of his audience. This is the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS) which 'Ammār ibn Yāsir (RA) told us about:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'A man's making the prayer long and keeping his *khuṭbah* short is a sign of his understanding, so make your prayers long and your *khuṭbah* short.'" [Muslim]

One of the methods of wise, intelligent *da'wah* is to be gentle with the people one is calling, and to show patience towards their ignorance, mistakes and many tedious questions, and their slowness in understanding. This is the way of the supreme *dā'ī*, the Seal of the Prophets (SAAS), who used to open his heart to those who asked questions, and was always gentle in his answers to them. He approached them with an attitude of love and an earnest desire to guide them, correct them and teach them, so he would keep explaining a matter to them until they understood it and dispersed content with the lesson they had learned.

An example of this gentle approach is the account of the *Ṣaḥābī* Mu'āwiyah ibn al-Ḥakam al-Salami (RA), who said: "Whilst I was praying with the Prophet (SAAS), one of the men in the congregation sneezed, so I said, '*Yarḥamuk Allah* (may Allah have mercy on you).' The people glared at me, so I said, 'May my mother be bereft of me! What are you staring at me like that for?'

They began to strike their thighs with their hands, and when I realized that they were telling me to be quiet, I fell silent. The Prophet (SAAS), may my father and mother be sacrificed for him, finished the prayer, and I have never seen a better teacher than he, before or since. By Allah, he did not rebuke me or strike me or insult me. He merely said, 'This prayer should contain nothing of the everyday speech of men; it is just *tasbīḥ*, *takbīr* and the recitation of Qur'ān,' or words to that effect. I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I am still very close to the time of *jāhiliyyah* (i.e., I am very new in Islam). Allah has brought us Islam, yet there are some among us who still go to soothsayers.' He said, 'Never go to them.' I said, 'And there are some who are superstitious.' He said, 'That is just something that they imagine; it should not stop them from going ahead with their plans.'" [Muslim]

The Prophet's gentle approach in his calling people to the truth reached such an extent that he did not directly confront a wrong-doer with his deeds, so that he would not hurt his feelings or cause him to lose face. Instead, he would denounce the wrong deed indirectly, and gently draw the person's attention to it. This method is more successful in reaching people's hearts and dealing with errors and faults.

'Ā'ishah (RA) said:

> "When the Prophet (SAAS) heard that someone had done something wrong, he did not say 'What is wrong with so-and-so that he says (such-and-such)?' Rather, he would say, 'What is wrong with some people that they say such-and-such?..."[1]

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[1] *Ḥayāt al-Saḥābah*, 3/129.

Another feature of the successful *dā'ī* is that he speaks clearly to his audience and repeats his words, as Anas (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) used to repeat things three times when he spoke, so that they would be understood. When he came to a people, he would greet them with *salām* three times." [al-Bukhārī]

'Ā'ishah (RA) said:

> "The speech of the Prophet was very clear. Everyone who heard it understood it."[1]

He is not a hypocrite

The true Muslim is the furthest removed from hypocrisy, flattery and false praise, because the guidance of Islam protects him from sinking to the lowest level, as so many people nowadays have done, without realizing that they have sunk to the depth of disastrous, loathsome hypocrisy.

The Prophet (SAAS) has protected us from falling into the mire of hypocrisy and flattery. When Banū 'Āmir came to him and praised him, saying "You are our master," he said, 'The only Master is Allah." When they said, "You are the most excellent and greatest of us," he said, "Say what you say, or a part of it, but do not speak like agents of Shayṭān. I do not want you to raise me above the status to which Allah has appointed me. I am Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, His servant and His Messenger."[2]

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

[2]*Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 3/99.

The Prophet (SAAS) prevented people from exaggerating in their praise of others, some of whom may not even be deserving of praise, when he forbade them to describe him as "master," "excellent," and "great," at the time when he was without doubt the master of the Muslims and the greatest and most excellent of them. He did this because he understood that if the door of praise was opened to its fullest extent, it might lead to dangerous types of hypocrisy which are unacceptable to a pure Islamic spirit and the truth on which this religion is based. He forbade the *Ṣaḥābah* to praise a man to his face, lest the one who spoke the words crossed the boundary of hypocrisy, or the object of his admiration be filled with feelings of pride, arrogance, superiority and self-admiration.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dāwūd narrate that Abū Bakrah (RA) said: "A man praised another man in the presence of the Prophet (SAAS), who said, 'Woe to you! You have cut your companion's throat! You have cut your companion's throat! You have cut your companion's throat!' Then he said, 'Whoever of you insists on praising his brother, let him say, "I think so-and-so is such-and-such, and Allah knows the exact truth, and I do not confirm anyone's good conduct before Allah, but I think him to be such-and-such," if he knows that this is the case.'"

If praising a person cannot be avoided, then it must be sincere and based on truth. The praise should be moderate, reserved and without any exaggeration. This is the only way in which a society can rid itself of the diseases of hypocrisy, lies, deceit and sycophancy.

Al-Bukhārī reports from Rajā' from Miḥjan al-Aslamī (RA) that the Prophet (SAAS) and Miḥjan were in the mosque when the Prophet (SAAS) saw a man praying, bowing and prostrating, and asked, "Who is that?" Miḥjan began to praise the man, saying, "O

Messenger of Allah, he is so-and-so, and is such-and-such." The Prophet (SAAS) said, "Stop. Do not let him hear you or it will be his downfall!" According to a report given by Aḥmad, Miḥjan said, "O Messenger of Allah, this is so-and-so, one of the best people of Madīnah," or "one of the people who prays the most in Madīnah," and the Prophet (SAAS) said, "Do not let him hear you, or it will be his downfall!" - two or three times - "You are an *ummah* for whom I wish ease."

The Prophet (SAAS) described hearing praise as being a person's downfall, because of its profound psychological impact on the human mind which by nature loves to hear such words. So the one who is praised begins to feel superior to and to look down on other people. If such praise is repeated by the hypocrites and flatterers - and how many of them there are surrounding those in positions of power and authority! - this will satisfy a strong desire in his heart and will become something he wants to hear regularly. Then he will hate to hear criticism and advice, and will only accept praise, thanks and adulation. No wonder, then, that truth will be lost, justice will be eliminated, morality will be destroyed and society will be corrupted.

For this reason the Prophet (SAAS) ordered his Companions to throw dust in the faces of those who praise others, lest their number, and hence hypocrisy and flattery, increase, which would have had disastrous consequences for the whole Muslim society.

Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Aḥmad - and al-Tirmidhī with a different *isnād* - report that a man began to praise one of the governors, so al-Miqdād (RA) started to throw dust in his face, saying: "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'If you see those who praise others, then throw dust in their faces.'"

The *Sahābah*, may Allah be pleased with them, used to feel upset when they heard others praising them, although they were the most deserving of such praise, because they feared its disastrous consequences and adhered to the basic principles of Islam that abhor such cheap, empty expressions. Nāfi' (RA) and others said: "A man said to Ibn 'Umar (RA): 'O you who are the best of people!' Or 'O son of the best of people!' Ibn 'Umar said, I am not the best of people, neither am I the son of the best of people. I am just one of the servants of Allah: I hope for His (mercy) and and fear His (wrath). By Allah, you will continue to pursue a man (with your praise) until you bring about his downfall.'"[1]

This is a wise statement from a great *Sahābī* of the utmost Islamic sensibilities, who adhered to Islamic teachings both in secret and openly.

The *Sahābah* understood precisely the Prophet's guidance telling them that their words and deeds should be free from hypocrisy. The great difference between that which is done sincerely for the sake of Allah and that which is merely hypocrisy and flattery was abundantly clear to them.

Ibn 'Umar (RA) said that some people said to him, "When we enter upon our rulers, we tell them something different from what we say when we have left them." Ibn 'Umar said, "At the time of the Prophet (SAAS), we used to consider this to be hypocrisy."[al-Bukhārī]

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[1] *Hayāt al-Sahābah*, 3/103

He does not show off or boast

The true Muslim is the least likely to show off, because doing so reduces reward, cancels out good deeds and brings humiliation on the Day when mankind is resurrected to meet its Lord.

The basic principles of Islam are sincerity towards Allah in word and deed, and worshipping Him, which is the prupose behind the creation of mankind and *jinn*, as Allah says:

> **"I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me."** [*al-Dhāriyāt* 51:56]

But this worship cannot be accepted unless it is done sincerely for the sake of Allah:

> **"And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being True (in faith) . . ."**
> [*al-Bayyinah* 98:5]

When this worship is contaminated with any intention of showing off or seeking a good reputation, it becomes invalid and its reward is lost. We find this in the warning that Allah issues to those who spend their wealth on the poor then remind them of how they are the ones who have met their needs, which hurts the feelings of the poor:

> **"O you who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury - like those who spend their substance to be seen of men, but believe neither in Allah nor the Last Day. They are in Parable like a hard, barren rock, on which is a little soil; on it falls heavy**

> **rain, which leaves it (just) a bare stone. They will be able to do nothing with aught they have earned. And Allah guides not those who reject faith."** [*al-Baqarah* 2:264]

Reminding the poor of one's generosity cancels out the reward of these acts of charity, just as pouring water washes away all traces of soil on a smooth stone. The last part of the *āyah* presents the frightening admonition that those who show off do not deserve the guidance of Allah, and are counted as *kāfirs*: **"And Allah guides not those who reject faith."**

Such people's main concern is to appear to people to be doing good works; they are not concerned with earning the pleasure of Allah. Allah has described them as doing apparently good deeds:

> **". . . to be seen of men, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance."**
> [*al-Nisā'* 4:142]

Thus their deeds will be thrown back in their faces, because they associated something or someone else with Allah, and Allah does not accept any deeds except those which are done purely for His sake, as is stated in the *hadīth* of Abū Hurayrah (RA) in which he reports that he heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say:

> "Allah said: 'I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus he who does an action for someone else's sake as well as Mine will have that action renounced by Me to the one whom he associated with Me.'" [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) has clearly explained this issue and referred to the terrible humiliation that those who show off will suffer on

that awful Day **"whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart."** [*al-Shu'arā'* 26:88-89]

This is mentioned in another *ḥadīth* reported by Abū Hurayrah, in which he says:

> "I heard the Prophet (SAAS) say: 'The first person to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who was martyred. He will be brought forth and Allah will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I fought for Your sake until I was martyred." Allah will say, "You have lied. You only fought so that people would say, 'He is courageous,' and they did say it." Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire. Then there will be a man who studied much and taught others, and recited Qur'ān. He will be brought forth and Allah will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I studied much, and taught others, and recited Qur'ān forYour sake." Allah will say, "You have lied. You studied so that people would say, He is a scholar,'and you recited Qur'ān so that they would say, 'he is a *qārī'*,' and they did say it." Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire. Then there will be a man to whom Allah gave all types of wealth in abundance. He will be brought forth and Allah will remind him of His blessings, and he will recognize them. Then he will be asked, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I have never

> seen any way in which You would like money to be spent for Your sake without spending it." Allah will say, "You have lied. You did that so that people would say, 'he is generous,' and they did say it." Then He will order that he be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire.'" [Muslim]

This *hadīth* describes the cases where man is most prone to boasting and showing off, namely courage, knowledge and generosity. The Prophet (SAAS) described the humiliation which such people will suffer in front of all of mankind on the Day of Judgement, when they will be denied the high status they had hoped to achieve, and the great loss they will suffer when they are refused the reward which Allah has prepared for those deeds. Instead of being taken to the Garden of eternal bliss, they will be thrown on their faces into the Fire of Hell.

The Muslim who truly understands his religion will avoid showing off in any of his deeds, and will take care to ensure that they are done purely for the sake of Allah, always bearing in mind the words of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whoever shows off, Allah will show him up (on the Day of Judgement), and whoever is a pretender, Allah will reveal his true colours." [Agreed upon]

He is straightforward and consistent in his adherence to the truth

The true, sincere Muslim is honest, straightforward and consistent (*mustaqīm*), never twisted, ambiguous, incoherent or deceitful, no matter how difficult this may be for him in his dealings with people.

This straightforwardness in the Muslim's life and behaviour is not an optional extra. It is conduct which has been commanded by Allah and His Messenger, and in many *āyāt* of the Qur'ān it comes second in importance only to belief in Allah:

> **"In the case of those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and, further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time): 'Fear not!' (They suggest), 'nor grieve! But receive the Glad Tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), that which you were promised! We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter: therein shall you have all that your souls shall desire: therein shall you have all that you ask for! - A hospitable gift from One Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"** [*Fussilat* 41:30-32]

Such will be the reward of those believers who are straightforward and honest. Theirs will be a most honourable status on the Day of Judgement, and the angels will bring them the most beautiful tidings.

Such straightforwardness and uprightness is difficult to achieve, and it is attained only by those pious believers who have devoted themselves purely to Allah, and freed themselves from the bonds of servitude to anything other than Him, such as wealth, influence, power, leisure, or anything else that is dear to people's hearts in this life. No wonder that their reward is immense and their status with Allah is very high indeed.

Nothing gives a clearer indication of the importance of straightforwardness and the difficulty of attaining it than the great impact it had on the heart of the Prophet (SAAS), who had deep

insight into its dimensions and gravity, and its importance in deciding a man's ultimate destiny. We see this in the commentary of Ibn 'Abbās (RA) on the *āyah* **"... Therefore stand firm (in the Straight Path) as you are commanded..."** [*Hūd* 11:112]. He said: "No *āyah* that was revealed to the Prophet (SAAS) was more burdensome or of greater concern to him than this *āyah*. When his Companions said 'Your hair has started to turn grey,' he said, '*Surat Hūd* and its sisters have turned my hair grey,' referring to this *āyah*, **'... Therefore stand firm ...'**"[1]

One of the concise phrases of the Prophet (SAAS), which has the same meaning as the *āyah* **"Those who say 'Our Lord is Allah,' and, further, stand straight and steadfast,"** is his command to Sufyān ibn 'Abdullah al-Thaqafī: "Say, 'I believe in Allah,' then adhere steadfastly to it." [Muslim] This was when Sufyān said to him: "O Messenger of Allah, tell me something about Islam that I need never ask anyone else but you about it." This is what prompted Imām Muslim to call his chapter on *istiqāmah* "*Bāb jāmi' awṣāf al-Islam* (Concerning the comprehensive attributes of Islam)", for the *istiqāmah* (straightforwardness, uprightness) which is based on faith in Allah encompasses all noble virtues, high moral standards and good deeds.

One of the primary features of this *istiqāmah* is that the Muslim is straightforward and not two-faced; he is not fickle like those who cheat and deceive, those whom the Prophet (SAAS) condemned in the *ḥadīth*:

> "The worst of people are those who are two-faced, who present one face to some people and a different face to others." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

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[1]See the chapter *Jāmi' awṣāf al-Islam* in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*.

He visits the sick

The true Muslim visits the sick, regarding this as his Islamic duty, not an optional extra. In doing so, he knows that he is obeying the command of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Visit the sick, feed the hungry, and ransom the prisoners of war." [al-Bukhārī]

Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) commanded us to visit the sick, to attend funerals, to bless someone when he sneezes[1], to fulfil all oaths, to come to the aid of the oppressed, to accept invitations, and to greet everyone with *salām*." [Agreed upon]

This custom which the Prophet (SAAS) taught is so deeply-rooted in the Muslim way of life that it became the right of one Muslim over another. He may demand it if his brother is negligent or failing in his duty, and the one who is failing in his duty is considered by Islam to be a careless sinner who is also wronging himself:

> "The rights of a Muslim over his brother are five: he should return his *salām*, visit the sick, attend funerals, accept invitations, and bless a person when he sneezes." [Agreed upon]

In another report, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

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[1] By saying *yarhamuk Allah* (may Allah have mercy on you). [Translator]

> "The rights of the Muslim over his brother are five." It was asked, "What are they?" The Prophet (SAAS) said: "When you meet him, greet him with *salām*; when he invites you, accept his invitation; when he seeks your advice, advise him; when he sneezes and says '*Al-ḥamdu-lillah*,' bless him (by saying *yarḥamuk Allah*); when he is ill, visit him; and when he dies, accompany him (to his grave)." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

When the Muslim visits his sick brother, he does not feel that he is only fulfilling his duty or obeying a commandment, but he senses a feeling of spiritual joy and satisfaction which none can feel except those who truly understand the *ḥadīth* which describes the beauty, goodness and blessing contained in such visits. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection: 'O son of Adam, I fell ill and you did not visit Me.' He will say, 'O Lord, how could I visit You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' He will say, 'Did you not know that My servant so-and-so had fallen ill, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that had you visited him, you would have found Me with him? O son of Adam, I asked you for food and you did not feed Me.' He will say, 'O Lord, how could I feed you when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' He will say, 'Did you not know that My servant so-and-so asked you for food, and you did not feed him? Did you not know that had you fed him you would surely have found that [i.e., the reward for doing so] with Me? O son of Adam, I asked you to give Me to drink and you did not give Me to drink.' He will say, 'O Lord, how could I

> give You to drink when You are the Lord of the Worlds?' He will say, 'My servant so-and-so asked you to give him to drink and you did not give him to drink. Had you given him to drink you would surely have found that with him.'" [Muslim]

How blessed is such a visit, and how great a good deed, which a man undertakes to do for his sick brother, when by doing so he is in the presence of the Almighty Lord who witnesses his noble deed and rewards him generously for it. Is there any greater and more blessed visit which is honoured and blessed and encouraged by the Lord of Heaven and Earth? How great is the misery and loss that will befall the one who failed in this duty! How great will be his humiliation when the Almighty Lord declares, before all present: "O son of Adam, I fell ill and you did not visit Me . . . Did you not know that My servant so-and-so had fallen ill, and you did not visit him? Did you not know that had you visited him, you would have found Me with him?" We will leave to our imagination the sense of regret, humiliation and shame that will overwhelm the man who neglected to visit his sick brother, at the time when such regret will be of no avail.

The sick person in an Islamic community feels that he is not alone at his hour of need; the empathy and prayers of the people around him envelop him and alleviate his suffering. This is the pinnacle of human civility and emotion. No other nation in history has ever known such a level of emotional and social responsibility as exists in the *ummah* of Islam.

The sick person in the West may find a hospital to admit him and a doctor to give him medicine, but rarely will he find a healing touch, compassionate word, kindly smile, sincere prayers, or true empathy. The materialistic philosophy that has taken over westerners' lives has extinguished the light of human emotion,

destroyed brotherly feelings towards one's fellow-man, and removed any motives but materialistic ones for doing good deeds.

The Westerner does not have any motive to visit the sick, unless he feels that he may gain some material benefit from this visit sooner or later. In contrast, we find that the Muslim is motivated to visit the sick in the hope of earning the reward which Allah has prepared for the one who gets his feet dusty (i.e., goes out and about) for His sake.

There are many *aḥadīth* texts on this topic, which awaken feelings of brotherhood in the Muslim's heart and strongly motivate him to visit his sick brother. For example:

> "When the Muslim visits his (sick) Muslim brother, he will remain in the fruits of Paradise[1] until he returns." [Muslim]

> "No Muslim visits a (sick) Muslim in the morning but seventy thousand angels will bless him until the evening, and if he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels will bless him until the morning, and fruits from Paradise will be his."[2]

With his deep insight into human psychology, the Prophet (SAAS) understood the positive impact of such visits on the sick person and his family, so he never neglected to visit the sick and speak to them the kindest words of prayer and consolation. He was the epitome of such kindness, which led him to visit a young Jewish boy who used to serve him, as Anas (RA) narrated:

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[1]A metaphor for the reward earned [Translator].

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

> "A young Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet (SAAS). He fell ill, so the Prophet (SAAS) went to visit him. He sat by his head and told him, 'Enter Islam.' The boy looked to his father, who was present with him. His father said, 'Obey Abū'l-Qāsim.' So the boy entered Islam. The Prophet (SAAS) left, saying, 'Praise be to Allah, Who has saved him from the Fire." [al-Bukhārī]

When visiting this sick Jewish boy, the Prophet (SAAS) did not neglect to call him to Islam, because he knew the effects his visit would have on the boy and his father, who were overwhelmed by his generosity, kindness and gentle approach. So they responded to him, this visit bore fruits of guidance, and the Prophet (SAAS) left praising Allah that a soul had been saved from the Fire. What a great man, and what a wise and eloquent *dā'ī* the Prophet (SAAS) was!

The Prophet (SAAS) was so concerned about visiting the sick that he set out principles and guidelines for so doing, which were followed by the *Saḥābah* and recorded in the books of *sunnah*.

One of these practices is to sit at the head of the sick person, as we have seen in the story of the Jewish boy, and as Ibn 'Abbās (RA) said:

> "When the Prophet (SAAS) visited a sick person, he would sit at his head then say seven times: 'I ask Almighty Allah, the Lord of the Mighty Throne, to heal you.'"[1]

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

Another of these practices is to wipe the body of the sick person with the right hand and pray for him, as 'Ā'ishah (RA) reported:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) used to visit some of his relatives and wipe them with his right hand, saying 'O Allah, Lord of mankind, remove the suffering. Heal for You are the Healer. There is no healing except for Your healing, the healing which leaves no trace of sickness.'" [Agreed upon]

Ibn 'Abbās (RA) said: "The Prophet (SAAS) went to visit a Bedouin who was sick, and whenever he visited a sick person, he would say, 'No worry, (it is) purification[1], in sha Allah." [al-Bukhārī]

The Muslims conveyed this *sunnah* of visiting the sick from one generation to another, and it remained a feature of their social life, a sign of their mutual ties, love, mercy and solidarity which would mend broken hearts, wipe the tears of the bereaved, lift the clouds of depression, relieve despair, establish ties of friendship, strengthen the ties of brotherhood, and encourage faithfulness and hope.

He attends funerals

The true Muslim attends funerals in his community and accompanies the deceased to the grave, in obedience to the command of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "The rights of one Muslim over another are five: returning *salām*, visiting the sick, attending

[1] i.e., may your sickness be an expiation and cleanse you of your sins [Author].

> funerals, accepting invitations, and blessing the one who sneezes." [Agreed upon]

He does not neglect his duty to promote true Islamic awareness at such times, when many *bid'ahs* and errors are prevalent, such as neglecting the prayer, or wailing loudly and screaming or eulogizing the dead, and other customs which may keep people from doing what is right because they are too preoccupied with preparing the body and accompanying it to the grave, and with consoling the bereaved family.

When the moment of death approaches and the Muslim sees that the person is dying, he prompts him to bear witness that there is no god but Allah, in accordance with the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Prompt those who are dying to say *lā ilāha ill-Allah.*" [Muslim]

When the dying man has surrendered his soul, the Muslim prays for him as the Prophet (SAAS) prayed for Abū Salamah when he died:

> "O Allah, forgive Abū Salamah, and raise his status among those who are rightly-guided, and grant him a successor among his descendents who remain. Forgive us and him, O Lord of the Worlds; make his grave spacious and illuminate it for him." [Muslim]

Then he tells the family of the deceased whatever he knows of *aḥādīth* that will console and comfort them, and he explains the virtue of seeking reward with Allah and bearing the bereavement with patience, and the great reward that Allah has prepared for

those who are patient and seek His reward, as Abū Hurayrah reported:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Allah has said: "If I take away the loved ones of My believing servant in this world, and he bears that with patience and fortitude, then there is no other reward with Me for him than Paradise."''' [al-Bukhārī]

He also reminds them of the attitude that the believers should adopt at the time of death, according to the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS), as recorded in the *hadīth* of Usāmah ibn Zayd (RA) who said:

> "One of the daughters of the Prophet (SAAS) sent for him, calling him to come and telling him that her boy - or son - was dying. The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Go back to her and tell her that what Allah had taken belonged to Him, and to Him belonged what He granted, and He has an appointed time for everything. So tell her to have patience and to seek reward." [Agreed upon]

Another thing that the Muslim should do on such sorrowful occasions is to point out that acts such as wailing, eulogizing, tearing one's clothes, striking one's cheeks and raising one's voice to say words to make others weep, are all *harām*. He should explain to people, especially those who are ignorant, that all of these deeds hurt the deceased in his grave, and that those who do them have committed a serious sin, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The deceased suffers in his grave because of people's wailing over him," and in another report,

> "as long as they carry on wailing over him." [Agreed upon]

> "He is not one of us who strikes his cheeks, tears his clothes and follows the customs of the *Jāhiliyyah*." [Agreed upon]

Umm 'Aṭiyah Nusaybah (RA) said:

> "At the time of *bay'ah*, the Prophet (SAAS) made us pledge that we would not wail." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The woman who wails, and does not repent before she dies, will be raised on the Day of Resurrection wearing a shirt of tar and a garment of scabs." [Muslim]

As for the tears that fall from the eyes, as testimony to the pain and grief raging in the heart, there is no blame on those who weep so long as they do not wail, scream, eulogize the deceased or engage in other *ḥarām* actions, as is reflected in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Ibn 'Umar (RA):

> "The Prophet (SAAS) visited Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah, accompanied by 'Abdul-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ and 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd (RA). The Prophet (SAAS) wept, and when the people saw the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) weeping, they wept too. He said, 'Are you not listening? Allah will not punish a man for the tears that fall from his eyes or for the grief he feels in his heart, but he

> will either punish or have mercy on a man because of this -' and he pointed to his tongue."
> [Agreed upon]

Usāmah ibn Zayd (RA) said:

> "The son of the Prophet's daughter was lifted up to him. The child was at the point of death, and tears welled up in the Prophet's eyes. Sa'd said, 'What is this, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'This is the compassion which Allah has placed in the hearts of His servants, and Allah will show compassion to those of His servants who are compassionate.'" [Agreed upon]

Anas said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) entered upon his son Ibrāhīm, as he was surrendering his soul (i.e., dying). Tears began to well up in the Prophet's eyes. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf said to him, 'Even you, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'O Ibn 'Awf, this is compassion.' Then he wept some more and said, 'The eyes shed tears, and the heart feels grief, but we say only that which will please our Lord. And truly we are deeply grieved by your departure, O Ibrāhīm.'" [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The true Muslim takes care, when he attends funerals, to stay until the deceased is buried, because this will bring him a great reward, as was described by the Prophet (SAAS):

> "Whoever attends a funeral until the prayer is offered for the dead will have the reward of one

qīrāt, and whoever attends a funeral and stays until the deceased is buried, will have the reward of two *qīrāts*." It was asked, "What are the *qīrāts*?" He said, "They are like two huge mountains." [Agreed upon]

Islam's encouraging Muslims to attend funerals until the deceased is buried serves to reinforce the ties of brotherhood and to deepen the feelings of loyalty among them. Through their participation, the bereaved family will be comforted, consoled and helped to bear their loss with patience, especially when they realize that the crowded rows of people praying for their loved one will intercede for him, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "If any Muslim dies and forty men who associate nothing with Allah stand up to pray for him, Allah will accept them as intercessors for him." [Muslim]

The Muslim should know how to perform the *janāzah* prayer, and he should memorize the *du'ā's* that have been reported from the Prophet (SAAS). When the coffin has been placed before the congregation and the people have formed rows to pray for the deceaed, the Imām gives the first *takbīrah* (i.e., says "*Allahu akbar*"), then he seeks refuge with Allah and recites *Surat al-Fātihah*. Then he gives the second *takbīrah*, after which the Prophet (SAAS) would recite *al-salawāt al-Ibrāhīmiyyah*. Then he gives the third *takbīrah*, and he prays for the deceased and for the Muslims. One of the most *sahīh du'ā's* reported from the Prophet (SAAS) is that reported by 'Awf ibn Mālik (RA), who said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) prayed for someone who had died, and I memorized his *du'ā'*: 'O Allah, forgive

> him, have mercy upon him, give him peace and absolve him. Receive him with honour (in Paradise) and make his grave spacious. Cleanse him from faults as You would cleanse a white garment from impurity. Requite him with an abode better than his abode, with a family better than his family and with a mate better than his mate. Admit him to the Garden, and protect him from the torment of the grave and the torment of the Fire.'" ('Awf ibn Mālik said: "I even wished that I were that dead person.") [Muslim]

Then the imām gives the fourth *takbīrah* and recites the following *du'ā'*:

> "O Allah, do not deny us this reward, do not cause us to go astray after his death, and forgive us and him."

Then he gives the *salām* to end the prayer.

The Muslim should walk with the cortège until the coffin is placed at the graveside, then when the burial is complete, he should ask forgiveness for the deceased and pray for him to have the strength to answer the angels' questions in the grave. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do and enjoin upon others, as 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (RA) reported:

> "When the Prophet (SAAS) finished burying the deceased, he would stand over him and say, 'Seek forgiveness for your brother and ask for him to

> have the strength to answer the questions of the angels, for even now is he being questioned.'"[1]

'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ said: "When you bury me, stand around my grave for the length of time it would take to slaughter a camel and share its meat out among the people, so that I may benefit from your company and know how I should answer the envoys of my Lord.'" [Muslim]

Al-Shāfi'ī said: "It is recommended that they should read something of the Qur'ān by the grave; if they complete the whole of the Qur'ān, that is good."

The Muslim's participation on such occasions is indicative of his understanding of social life in all its dimensions. Life is not just the matter of joy and happy occasions; rather it is both joy and sorrow, happiness and grief, ease and hardship, laughter and tears. The true Muslim has a role to play in all this. He does not neglect any aspect of life, because on all occasions he has a message to deliver, a word to say and a duty to perform.

He repays favours and is grateful for them

One of the good characteristics of the Muslim is his attitude towards favours done to him. He repays the favour, acknowledges it, is grateful for it and does not forget it, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever has a good turn done to him should return the favour."[2]

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī; when all its *isnāds* are taken in combination, it is considered to be a *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

> "Whoever seeks refuge with Allah, then grant him protection . . . and whoever does you a good turn, then return the favour."[1]

Gratitude for favours is a basic characteristic of the Muslim which is encouraged by the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS). It is not merely the matter of social courtesy dictated by mood or whatever interests may be at stake. The one who does a favour deserves to be thanked, even if no particular interest is served by his deed. It is sufficient that he has done a favour, and for this he deserves to be sincerely thanked. This is what Islam expects of the Muslims.

The concern of Islam to establish this attitude in the heart of the Muslim reached the extent that gratitude towards Allah is deemed to be incomplete and imperfect without gratitude towards people for their favours and good deeds. The one who does not thank people for their acts of kindness or find a word to say that will make them feel chivalrous, is an ungrateful wretch who does not appreciate blessings or give thanks for them. Such a one is not qualified to give thanks to Allah, the Giver of all blessings and favours. Concerning this the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "He does not give thanks to Allah who does not give thanks to people."[2]

Thanking the one who has done a favour encourages good deeds and makes people become accustomed to acknowledging and appreciating good deeds. All of this will strengthen the ties of friendship between the members of a community, open their hearts

[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd, al-Nisā'ī and Ahmad. Its *isnād* is *sahīh*.

[2] Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

to love, and motivate them to do good deeds. This is what Islam aims to instil and reinforce in the Islamic society.

He mixes with people and puts up with their insults

The active Muslim mixes with people and bears their insults with patience, because he is a man with a mission who has a message to deliver. Whoever undertakes this important mission should be prepared and accept the fact that he will have to make sacrifices and be patient with the foolish ideas that people have, their bad behaviour, their suspicions and hard-hearted natures, their laziness and slow response to the truth, their focus on their own selfish interests, and other trivial matters that annoy the *dā'īs* and may make them, in moments of boredom, irritation or tiredness, feel inclined to isolate themselves and keep away from people. So the Prophet (SAAS) sought to strengthen the resolve of the believers and reassure them, by announcing that those who have patience in treading the long and difficult path of *da'wah* are better than those who have no patience:

> "The believer who mixes with people and bears their insults with patience is better than the one who does not mix with people or bear their insults with patience."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS), and the other Prophets before him, represent the supreme example of patience in the face of people's misbehaviour, suspicions and foolishness. The *dā'ī* needs to hold fast to this example every time he feels his patience running out, or that he is under stress and overwhelmed by the insults and hostility of people.

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

One example of the Prophet's supreme patience comes in a report given by al-Bukhārī and Muslim. The Prophet (SAAS) divided some goods as he usually did, but one of the *Anṣār* said, "By Allah, this division was not done for the sake of Allah." The Prophet (SAAS) heard these unjust words and was deeply offended by them. His expression changed and he became angry, but then he said, "Mūsā suffered worse insults than these, and he bore them with patience." With these few words, the Prophet's anger was dispelled and his noble, forgiving heart was soothed.

This is the attitude of the Prophets and the sincere *dā'īs* in every time and place: patience in the face of people's insults, suspicions and rumours. Without this patience, the *da'wah* could not continue and the *dā'īs* could not persevere.

The true Muslim does not fail to speak kindly and gently to people, to be sociable and at the same time to be cautious of their evil inclinations and sharp tongues, if they are foolish types. The believer is intelligent in his dealings with people and is clever in the way that he speaks to them, so that they do not feel any harshness or rudeness from him. This is the example of the Prophet (SAAS), as is seen in the report given by Imām al-Bukhārī from 'Ā'ishah (RA):

> "A man sought permission to enter upon the Prophet (SAAS) and he said, 'Let him in, what a bad son of his tribe (or: bad brother of his tribe) he is!' When the man came in, the Prophet (SAAS) spoke to him kindly and gently. I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you said what you said, then you spoke to him kindly.' He said, 'O 'Ā'ishah, the worst of the people in the sight of Allah is the one who is shunned by others or whom people treat nicely because they fear his sharp tongue.'"

Abū'l-Dardā' used to say: "We smile at people even if in our hearts we are cursing them." [al-Bukhārī]

People will not always be of the type that the *dā'ī* may prefer; indeed they will often be the opposite of what he likes. So the *dā'ī* must always bear them with patience and deal with them in a wise way that will make them more inclined towards the truth to which he is calling them.

He tries to make people happy

The Muslim who is guided by his religion is keen to spread happiness, friendship and joy wherever he goes. Making people happy, within the framework of what is *ḥalāl*, is an Islamic duty that is strongly encouraged, so that the Muslims' environment may be one that is filled with happiness, joy, cheerfulness and friendliness. For this reason Islam tells us that the reward of one who makes Muslims happy will be the greater happiness that Allah will bestow upon him on the Day of Resurrection:

> "Whoever meets his Muslim brother and makes him happy with something that Allah likes, Allah will make him happy on the Day of Resurrection."[1]

There are many permissible ways for the Muslim to spread happiness among his brothers, such as saying a good word, giving a friendly smile, telling good news, offering comfort and consolation, visiting one's brother, performing acts of sincere kindness, and other deeds which will open hearts to love and remove hatred and malice from them. Hence the Muslim, according to the nature of his Islamic *tarbiyah*, operates within the

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[1]Reported by al-Tabarānī in *al-Ṣaghīr*. Its *isnād* is *ḥasan*.

framework of righteous deeds which will bring him closer to Allah and endear him to people.

He guides others to righteous deeds

Among those righteous deeds by which the true Muslim is known is his guiding and encouraging others to do good. So the Muslim does not hide any good deed or anything that may benefit others, because he knows that the one who guides others to do good is like the one who does the good deed:

> "Whoever guides others to do good will have a reward like that of the person who does the good deed." [Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī]

Therefore the Muslim is the least likely to keep goodness to himself: it is all the same to him whether he does the good deed himself or guides others to do it. In either case his reward is assured. In this way, goodness is spread throughout the society: everyone he guides in secret to do good will do it, without boasting or showing off.

How many of these deadly pyschological disorders are preventing good from being spread in society! For the people who are suffering from them hope that they alone will undertake good deeds to the exclusion of others, but circumstances prevent them from doing so. So goodness and benefits remain buried and society is deprived of that goodness which remains locked up waiting for the opportunity that never comes. The true Muslim who seeks to please his Lord and earn reward from Him is free from such disorders. He guides people to good deeds as soon as he himself is aware of them, and thus earns a reward from Allah equal to the reward of the one who does the good deed.

He is easy on people, not hard

The true Muslim is easy on people and not hard, because the attitude of the believer is always to make things easy. This is what Allah wants for His servants:

> **". . . Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties . . ."** [al-Baqarah 2:185]

Therefore the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged the Muslims to be easy on people, and forbade them to make things difficult:

> "Teach and make things easy, do not make them difficult. If any of you becomes angry, let him keep silent."[1]

No-one would want to make things difficult and complicate matters except the person who is twisted and mean-spirited, and whose education is lacking. The straightforward person whose Islamic education is sound does not like difficulties and complications, and does not do anything to hinder the bringing of benefits to others. He follows the example of the Prophet (SAAS) as reported by 'Ā'ishah (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) was never faced with the choice between two things but he took the easier of the two, so long as it was not a sin. If it was a sin, he would be the furthest of the people from it. And the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) never took revenge for himself, but if the bounds

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

of Allah were transgressed, then he would take revenge for the sake of Allah." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) fully understood the weakness of people and their different levels and potentials for patience and moral excellence. He knew that nothing is better for them than being easy with them, and nothing puts them off or hurts them more than making things too difficult for them. So he chose the easier option, within the framework of what is permitted according to the *sharī'ah*, and made it a way of life for the Muslims so that they would be free of the burden of having things made too difficult for them.

He is fair in his judgement of people

The truly-guided Muslim is fair in his judgement of people. He is never unjust and never deviates from the truth no matter what the circumstances. Justice and avoiding oppression (*ẓulm*) are at the heart of his faith and *'aqīdah*, and have been enjoined upon him in clear commandments of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* about which there can be no prevarication:

> **"Allah does command you to render back your Trusts to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice . . ."** [*al-Nisā'* 4:58]

Justice as known by the Muslim and the Islamic society, is absolute and pure justice. It is not influenced by friendship, hatred or blood ties:

> **"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and do not let the hatred of others to you make you swerve to**

> **wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do."**
> [*al-Mā'idah* 5:8]

> **". . . Whenever you speak, speak justly, even if a near relative is concerned . . ."**
> [*al-An'ām* 6:152]

The Prophet (SAAS) set the highest example of justice when Usāmah ibn Zayd came to intercede for the Makhzūmī woman who had committed theft, and the Prophet (SAAS) had decided to cut off her hand. He said: "Do you intercede concerning one of the punishments decreed by Allah, O Usāmah? By Allah, even if Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad had committed theft, I would have cut off her hand." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

This is absolute, universal justice which is applied to great and small, prince and commoner, Muslims and non-Muslims. None can escape its grasp, and this is what differentiates justice in Islamic societies from justice in other societies.

History records the impressive story that earns the respect of the institutions of justice throughout the world and at all times: the *khalīfah* 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib stood side by side in court with his Jewish oppenent, who had stolen his shield, on equal terms. The *qāḍī*, Shurayḥ, did not let his great respect for the *khalīfah* prevent him from asking him to produce evidence that the Jew had stolen his shield. When the *khalīfah* could not produce the evidence, the *qāḍī* ruled in favour of the Jew, and against the *khalīfah*. Islamic history is full of such examples which indicate the extent to which truth and justice prevailed in the Islamic society. So the true Muslim is fair and just in word and deed, because truth and justice

are an ancient part of his heritage and fairness is a sacred part of his belief.

He does not oppress or mistreat others

To the extent that the Muslim adheres to justice, he also avoids oppression (*ẓulm*), for oppression is darkness (*ẓulumāt*) in which the oppressor becomes lost, as the Prophet (SAAS) explained:

> "Keep away from oppression, for oppression is darkness on the Day of Resurrection . . ."
> [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The following *ḥadīth qudsī* definitively and eloquently expresses Allah's prohibition of oppression in a way that leaves no room for prevarication:

> "O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another." [Muslim]

Oppression is something which Allah has forbidden for Himself, and He is the Creator, the Sovereign, the Most Holy, the Exalted in Might, the Omnipotent, the Almighty, may He be glorified, and He has also prohibited it for His servants. Would it then be acceptable for oppression to come from a Muslim who is supposedly adhering to Islam?

> "A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim: he does not oppress him or forsake him when he is oppressed. Whoever helps his brother, Allah will help him; whoever relieves his brother from some distress, Allah will relieve him of some of his distress on the Day of Resurrection; whoever

covers (the fault of) a Muslim, Allah will cover him on the Day of Resurrection." [al-Bukhārī]

The Prophet (SAAS) did not stop at forbidding oppression to the extent that it could not even be imagined on the part of the true Muslim, but he also forbade the Muslim to abandon his oppressed brother, for abandoning him is in itself an act of severe oppression. Then he went on to encourage the Muslim to meet the needs of his brother and to relieve him of distress and to conceal his faults, as if he was suggesting that the failure to do these goods deeds was itself oppression and a denial of the rights of brotherhood that bind the Muslim and his brother.

We have seen above how Islam enjoins absolute justice which is not influenced by love, hatred, desires or ties of blood, and how it also forbids oppression in any form. This means that justice is to be applied to all people, and oppression against all people should be avoided, even in the case of non-Muslims. Allah has commanded justice and fair treatment, and has forbidden oppression and wrongdoing, to all people:

> **"Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For Allah loves those who are just."**
> [*al-Mumtaḥinah* 60:8]

He loves noble things and always aims high

The true Muslim always aims for noble things in his social relationships, and he never bases those relationships on trivial interests. He has no time for foolishness and inane matters. Because of the way Islam has formed him, according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, he loves to be serious and hates frivolity. He is

inclined towards lofty goals and hates to waste time. This is the kind of attitude that Allah loves to see in people, as the Prophet (SAAS) told us:

> "Allah is noble (*karīm*) and loves noble people. He loves noble things and hates foolishness."[1]

His speech is not exaggerated or affected

Thus the true Muslim avoids exaggerating in his speech for the purpose of showing off or attracting attention. Exaggerated speech and foolish chatter are not characteristics of the true Muslim who loves noble things and hates foolishness. They belong to the empty-headed person whose only concerns are to show off and attract attention. For this reason the Prophet (SAAS) was very harsh on those who exaggerated in their speech, and after his death Abū Bakr and 'Umar were similarly harsh on them, to the extent that 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ūd said:

> "By Him besides Whom there is no other god, I never saw anyone who was harsher on those who exaggerate in their speech than the Messenger of Allah (SAAS), and I never saw anyone who was harsher on them after his death than Abu Bakr, and I think that 'Umar feared the most for them of all people on earth."[2]

He does not rejoice in the misfortunes of others

The true Muslim also avoids rejoicing in the misfortunes of others and despising them, because *schadenfreude* (malicious enjoyment

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[1]Reported by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Kabīr*; its men are *thiqāt*.

[2]Reported by Abū Ya'lā and al-Ṭabarānī; its men are *thiqāt*.

of others' misfortunes) is a vile, hurtful attitude that Islam forbids and warns against, in the *ḥadīth*:

> "Do not express malicious joy at the misfortune of your brother, for Allah will have mercy on him and inflict misfortune on you."[1]

There is no room for *schadenfreude* in the heart of the true Muslim who is endued with the spirit and guidance of Islam. Instead, the Muslim feels sorry for the one who is faced with trials and difficulties: he hastens to help him and is filled with compassion for his suffering. *Schadenfreude* belongs only in those sick hearts that are deprived of the guidance of Islam and that are accustomed to plotting revenge and seeking out means of harming others.

He is generous

The true Muslim who sincerely seeks to follow the teachings of his religion is generous, and seeks to do good to the members of his society on all occasions and in all circumstances.

When he spends, he does so with the generosity of one who believes that his giving will not go to waste, for it is recorded with One Who has full knowledge of all things:

> **"... And whatever of good you give, be assured that Allah knows it well."** [*al-Baqarah* 2:273]

He also believes, when he spends his money generously, that whatever he spends will come back to him manifold and that Allah will multiply its reward in this world and the next:

[1] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

> **"The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it grows seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases: and Allah cares for all and He knows all things."** [*al-Baqarah* 2:261]

> **". . . and nothing do you spend in the least (in His Cause) but He replaces it . . ."** [*Sabā'* 34:39]

> **". . . Whatever of good you give benefits your own souls, and you shall only do so seeking the 'Face'[1] of Allah. Whatever good you give, shall be rendered back to you, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly."** [*al-Baqarah* 2:272]

The true Muslim spends his money, with the firm conviction that Allah will compensate him with blessing and increased reward for whatever he spends of his wealth in this world. If he is overcome with miserliness and holds back from giving, then His Lord will decrease his wealth and cause him loss. This is clearly shown in the *hadīth*:

> "Every morning that the servants of Allah get up, two angels come down. One of them says, 'O Allah, give compensation to the one who spends,' and the other says, 'O Allah, cause loss to the one who is stingy.'" [Agreed upon]

And in a *hadīth qudsī*:

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[1] 'Face' here is the literal translation of the Arabic word '*wajh*', which in this context may also mean the sake, cause or presence of Allah [Translator].

"Spend, O son of Adam, and I shall spend on you." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim who trusts in his Lord does not entertain any doubt that whatever he spends for the sake of Allah will not decrease his wealth at all, for charity increases wealth and does not decrease it:

"Charity does not decrease wealth . . ." [Muslim]

The reward for wealth that is spent for the sake of Allah is indescribably immense, for Allah will multiply it many times. Hence the Prophet (SAAS) used to say that the only wealth that was really saved was that which had been spent for the sake of Allah. 'Ā'ishah narrated that they slaughtered a sheep and the Prophet (SAAS) asked her, "What is left?" She said, "Nothing but the shoulder." He said, "Everything except the shoulder is saved."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) was keen to reinforce the spirit of generosity in the hearts of the Muslims, and to make it one of the virtues to attain which they would compete with one another, as he said:

"There is no envy except in two cases: a man to whom Allah has given wealth and caused him to spend it in the service of the truth; and a man to whom Allah has given wisdom, so he acts according to it and teaches it to others." [Agreed upon]

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*. The reward for everything except the shoulder would be stored up for them in the Hereafter, as they had given it all away in charity. The part that they had kept for themselves, the shoulder, had in effect been "spent" as it carried no such reward. [Translator]

The Prophet (SAAS) described spending wealth in support of the truth and having wisdom, acting according to it and teaching it to others, as being equal. He said that there should be no envy (in the positive sense of the word) except in these two cases. Spending for the sake of supporting the truth is of the utmost importance and of great benefit to the social life of the Muslims, as wealth is the nerve-centre of life, and spending it for the sake of the truth is a great deed that plays no less important a role in bringing benefit to people than the genius of those who are endowed with the gift of wisdom.

Therefore the true Muslim spends his wealth in the light of his understanding that it will come back to him with rewards and goodness. So you will see him spending it in a way that will guarantee him reward, without being unjust to his heirs or depriving them of it, and without being stingy in his spending in support of the truth. He is moderate in his spending and treads a middle path between these two extremes in accordance with the noble aims of the *sharī'ah*, so that the wealth of his heirs will not be dearer to him than spending for the sake of Allah. Rather, the wealth spent for the sake of Allah will be dearer to him than the wealth of his heirs, because the former is the wealth that is saved and recorded in the book of his good deeds. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) referred to when he said:

> "Which of you loves the wealth of his heirs more than his own wealth?' They said, "O Messenger of Allah, none of us loves the wealth of his heirs more than his own." He said, "His true wealth is that which he has spent (for the sake of Allah), and the wealth of his heirs is that which he has left behind." [al-Bukhārī]

Generosity is one of the best characteristics in Islam and of the Muslim. Hence when a man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and asked him "Which type of Islam is the best?" he said, "To feed people, and to say *salām* to those you know and those you do not know." [Agreed upon]

However, pursuing this ideal of generosity should not make the Muslim go to the extreme of spending all his wealth and leaving nothing at all for his heirs. Everything in Islam is balanced and integrated, and nothing should be done at the expense of something else. Just as spending for the sake of Allah is obligatory, so taking care of one's offspring and protecting them from being reduced to the level of begging is also obligatory. When Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ was severely ill and almost at the point of death, the Prophet (SAAS) visited him and Sa'd asked him: "O Messenger of Allah, I have much wealth, and I only have two daughters to inherit from me. Should I give two-thirds of my wealth in charity?" The Prophet (SAAS) said "No." He said, "Should I give half?" He said, "No." He said, "A third?" He said, "Give a third, but it is still a lot." Then the Prophet (SAAS) commented: "If you leave your children rich, it is better than if you leave them poor and begging from people. You will not spend anything (in charity) without being rewarded for it, even if it is the mouthful you raise to your wife's mouth." [al-Bukhārī *et al.*]

The Prophet (SAAS) was the embodiment of that genuine, pure generosity. He was never known to withhold from giving or to refuse anyone who came to ask of him. The *Ṣaḥābī* Jābir (RA) tells us of this:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) was never asked for anything and said 'No.'" [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) understood the effect of wealth on people, so he used it as a means of softening hearts and bringing people to Islam. He did not think it excessive to spend large amounts in order to win new converts to Islam, because he knew that a person whose main concern is initially wealth, will become a sincere Muslim once he enters Islam, and this will make him one of the strongest in faith. This is what the great *Ṣaḥābī* Anas ibn Mālik tells us:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) was never asked for anything that could advance the cause of Islam, but he gave it. A man came to him and he gave him a large flock of sheep. The man went back to his people and said, 'O my people, enter Islam, for Muḥammad gives like one who does not fear poverty.' If a man enters Islam solely for some worldly interst, it will not be long before Islam becomes dearer to him than the whole world and everything in it." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to spend whatever wealth came to him; he would distribute it among the people and not keep anything back for himself or his family. It was sufficient for him to give to those who deserved it, and thus open the hardest of hearts and instil the characteristic of generosity in them by setting the highest example. Jubayr ibn Muṭ'im (RA) said that while he was walking with the Prophet (SAAS) on the way back from Ḥunayn, the Bedouin followed him and asked him to give them something, until they cornered him by a tree. One of them snatched his cloak, so the Prophet (SAAS) stood up and said: "Give me my cloak, for if I had livestock equal in number to these *'iḍah* (fair-sized thorny shrubs), I would divide them among you, then you would not find me a miser, liar or coward." [al-Bukhārī]

Thus the Prophet (SAAS) set the highest example of that sincere generosity that is free from all self-interest and doubt. He achieved this in real life, so as to set an example for humanity to strive to reach this high level and he proved man's potential to do so. Thus man increases in generosity every time he draws closer to Allah. Every time he senses the reward that Allah has prepared for those who generously spend for His sake, he will become more generous. Every time he feels closer to Allah, his awareness of the reward for generosity will deepen, so he will give more freely. This is how the Prophet (SAAS) was when Jibrīl (AS) used to meet him in Ramaḍān. His level of generosity used to increase during the blessed month as a result on his ongoing contact with the Archangel, because Jibrīl used to meet him on every night of Ramaḍān, and this further increased the virtue, tolerance and generosity in his noble heart. Ibn 'Abbās said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) was the most generous of people, and he was the most generous in Ramaḍān when Jibrīl used to meet him. Jibrīl used to meet him on every night of Ramaḍān and the Prophet (SAAS) would recite the Qur'ān to him. When Jibrīl met him, the Prophet (SAAS) would be more generous than the wind."
> [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Not surprisingly, we find many in the first generation who came close to this high level of generosity, those who spent all of their wealth for the sake of Allah, like Abu Bakr (RA), or half of it, like 'Umar (RA), or who equipped and supplied an entire army, like 'Uthmān (RA), or who gave the most precious things they owned, like Abū'l-Daḥdāḥ, who gave the best garden he possessed in charity for the sake of Allah. When his wife learnt of what he had done, she said happily, "What a good deal you have got, O Abū'l-Daḥdāḥ!" There were so many of these generous people

who preferred the Hereafter to this world, so they gave up their wealth and their own interests for the sake of Allah.

These people were sincere towards Allah and were in constant contact with Him, so they put these teachings into effect and made them into a reality. They were not content merely to repeat them and feel moved by them, as most rich people do nowadays.

Among the rich nowadays are those who possess such millions and billions that if they were just to pay *zakāt* on their wealth, they would be able to totally eradicate poverty from their societies, let alone what could be achieved if they were to spend generously. But they withhold *zakāt* even though they know it is an obligation, one of the pillars of Islam. So you see them, if they give at all, spending a few pennies on Eid and other special occasions, or distributing bread and food in a few Islamic countries to a limited number of poor people. When simple-minded folk see masses of poor people standing at their doors and taking whatever crumbs may be thrown in their direction, they praise them for their generosity; these gullible people do not realize that the total spent by these millionaires does not even amount to the smallest part of what they should be giving, and that the few pennies they throw to the destitute are like sand thrown in their eyes (to blind them to reality). They pretend to obey Allah and spend for His sake, but nothing is hidden from the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of both rich and poor. They will not escape His punishment, for they are included among those described in the following *āyah*:

> **". . . And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah: announce unto them a most grievous penalty - On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks, and**

their backs - 'This is the (treasure) which you buried for yourselves: taste, then, the (treasures) you buried!'"
[*al-Tawbah* 9:34-35]

This group which grew rich through unIslamic economic systems was one of the reasons for the rise of left-wing systems and principles in Muslim countries, because of their greed and exploitation, and their neglect of the guidance of Allah. If they had known the rights that Allah has over their wealth, and had paid it with no holding back, no-one in the Muslim societies would have dared to advocate red communism or socialism, and the class hatred which is exploited by left-wing parties would not have been able to develop. This class hatred is the basis on which socialist governments destroyed the owners of factories and organizations, and took away their millions. Thus they lost the treasure which they had been too stingy to spend during the days of ease and plenty, when they would not even raise a poor worker's low wage or salary by half a *līra*, for fear that it might reduce their profits. Indeed, some of them would make a huge fuss about paying such a small increase, while at the same time they would turn a blind eye to the thousands upon thousands spent by some of their sons in nightclubs, where some would close the whole club at his own expense so that he might have the company of the beautiful dancers all to himself.

Oppression of the poor by the rich, and hatred of the rich by the poor, are unknown in a truly Islamic society, because in such a society the rich man is generous, he recognizes the rights of the poor with regard to his wealth, and he does not deny or cheat them of their right. He does not neglect to help, support and treat them fairly. The poor do not regard the rich with hatred because of their having more wealth. The rich man in an Islamic society does not earn his wealth from *ḥarām* sources; rather he earns it through his

own efforts and hard work from *ḥalāl* sources. The principle of equal opportunity which encompasses all the members of the Islamic society allows the poor man to work and strive to become rich if he wishes. The door is open to all, so any determined, active and ambitious person may enter it. So there is no need for hatred, opportunism and venegance, and there is no room for those hate-filled opportunists and lovers of revenge in a community of love and brotherhood, which is the society of Islam.

The Prophet (SAAS) used to teach his *Ṣaḥābah* and constantly encourage them to spend (in charity) and to uproot from their hearts the love of hoarding wealth, so that wealth would be distributed among the people and prosperity would spread to all, and so that stored-up wealth would not spell disaster for its owner on the Day of Resurrection. They had the highest example of that in the Prophet (SAAS).

One day the Prophet (SAAS) set off for al-Baqī', and Abū Dharr caught up with him. While they were walking together, he said:

> "Those who have the most will be those who have the least on the Day of Resurrection, except for those who spend here and there in the right way." Then they passed by Uḥud, and the Prophet (SAAS) said: "O Abū Dharr!" He replied, "At you service, O Messenger of Allah, may I be sacrificed for you." He said, "I would not like for the family of Muḥammad to have an amount of gold equal in size to Mount Uḥud, and for a *dirhām* or a *mithqāl* of it to be left with them by the time evening came." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

This explains the attitude of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) towards the rich men of Quraysh when they began to take things easy after

they had conquered so many lands. They began to trade and invest their wealth, and grew very rich. This alarmed 'Umar (RA), and he was deeply concerned for them, so he said:

> "Quraysh want to make the wealth of Allah circulate only amongst themselves, but as long as the son of al-Khaṭṭāb is alive they will not do that. I will lie in wait for them in Ḥarrat al-Madīnah, and I will grab them by their collars in order to save them from the Fire."

The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is abhorred by Islam, because it means that many others in society are deprived of that wealth. From this imbalance come the class system, oppression and exploitation, all of which are *ḥarām* and have no place in an Islamic society.

This is one point. The second is that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) announced that he would wait for them in Ḥarrat al-Madīnah so that he could prevent them from monopolizing trade and piling up wealth, and so that he could save them from rushing headlong into the Fire of Hell - not out of revenge or envy of what they had, as is encouraged by the materialistic systems that fill the hearts of the poor with hatred and the desire for revenge on the rich. Social justice is sought in Islam for the good of rich and poor alike, from the outset, before things get out of hand and hearts are filled with hatred. Social justice is also sought because it is in the interests of both and rich and poor, in this world and the next. We do not see this strong connection between this world and the Hereafter with regard to economic matters, except in the Islamic economic system.

The true Muslim is generous no matter how poor he is and no matter how small the amount he gives. It is sufficient for him to

have compassion in his heart towards those who are even poorer than him and to feel what others are suffering of the pain of deprivation. Hence many *aḥādīth* encourage the poor to spend a little, according to their ability, so that they will continue to feel that they are in solidarity with their brothers. Allah promised those who spend, no matter how small their gift or how poor they are, that their charity would bear fruits and increase until it became like a high mountain, on the condition that the money they spent came from a *ḥalāl* source:

> "Whoever gives charity equal in value to a date from a good source - for Allah does not accept anything but good - Allah will accept it in His right hand, and nurture it as any of you would nurture a foal, until it becomes like a mountain."
> [Agreed upon]

To prevent people from closing their minds and avoiding contributing to society, and to keep goodness, mercy and compassion flowing in their hearts, the Prophet (SAAS) called on them to give charity, no matter how little. He warned them against being negative and tight-fisted because such attitudes would lead to doom and punishment. He said:

> "Protect yourself from the Fire, even by (giving) just half a date (in charity)."
> [Agreed upon]

Allah wants the Muslim to be a good, beneficial, constructive element in his society, always overflowing with goodness towards people, whether he is rich or poor. So the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged the Muslim to do good, according to his abilities, and described every good deed as *ṣadaqah* (charity):

> "Every Muslim must give charity." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, what if he cannot do that?" He said, "Then let him work with his hands and benefit himself and give charity." They said, "What if he cannot do that?" He said, "Then let him help one who is in desperate need." He said, "What if he cannot do that?" He said, "Then let him do good, and refrain from doing evil, and that will be an act of charity on his part." [al-Bukhārī]

Islam extended the circle of goodness to encompass every Muslim. The one who is very poor need not feel that he is denied the opportunity to participate in this social goodness because of his lack of wealth. Every good deed that he does is an act of charity on his part, for which he will be rewarded just as the rich man will be rewarded for what he spends:

> "Every good deed is an act of charity."
> [al-Bukhārī]

Thus Islam guarantees that all members of a society will participate in building, serving and improving it, and that all of them will feel the satisfaction of this participation which will give them back their pride and honour and will bring about their reward.

Islam is realistic and is kind to the Muslims. It does not expect them to do more than they are able, and it does not ask them to spend anything except their excess wealth. It does not blame those who have only little, and it prefers that they should meet their own needs themselves, because the hand that gives is better than the hand that takes. But whatever is surplus to one's requirements may be used to compete in generosity, for the true Muslim does not hold back from doing any good deed, for he has learnt from his

religion that spending in charity is good, while withholding it is evil:

> "O son of Adam, if you spend your surplus wealth it is good for you, and if you withhold it, it is bad for you. There is no blame on you if you hold on to what you need. Begin (your spending in charity) with those for whose support you are responsible. The upper hand is better than the lower (i.e. it is better to give than to receive)." [Muslim]

The true Muslim does not forget to be generous and to give in charity whenever he has anything in excess of his own and his family's needs, even if it is savings that people keep to guarantee freedom from poverty or to raise themselves up to the level of being wealthy. Indeed, Islam sees charity in such circumstances as being the best kind of charity and the kind that will bring the greatest reward, as in the *ḥadīth* narrated by Abū Hurayrah:

> "A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what kind of charity is the best?' He said, 'The charity you give when you are healthy and tight-fisted, when you fear poverty and are hoping for wealth. Do not delay until you are about to die and say "This is for so-and-so and that is for so-and-so." It has already become the property of so-and-so.'" [Agreed upon]

The true, generous Muslim gives his charity especially to those who deserve help. He seeks out those among the poor and destitute who are too proud to ask people for anything, so that most people think that they are free from want. He goes to them, knocks on their doors, and gives them whatever will meet their needs and preserve their honour. This is because those poor but

proud people are the first ones who should be helped. These are the ones to whom the Prophet (SAAS) referred when he said:

> "The poor man is not the one who takes a date or two, or a mouthful or two, then turns away. The poor man is the one who is too proud to ask for anything." [Agreed upon]

According to a report quoted by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, he (SAAS) said:

> "The poor man is not the one who goes around to people and turns back after receiving a mouthful or two, or a date or two. The poor man is the one who does not have enough to make him free from want, but he is not so noticeable that charity is given to him, nor does he stand up and ask the people for charity."

The true, generous Muslim gives charity especially to the orphan. He sponsors him to the best of his ability, by spending on him and taking care of his affairs, whether the orphan is related to him or not. He does so hoping to receive the reward that Allah has prepared for the one who sponsors an orphan, which is a status so high that people would sacrifices their lives to attain it, and beside which other hopes and ambitions pale into insignificance, for it is nothing less than being in the vicinity of the Prophet (SAAS) in Paradise. Sahl ibn Sa'd (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'I and the one who sponsors an orphan will be like this in Paradise,' and he held up his index and middle fingers and held them apart." [Muslim]

The true Muslim strives to help the widow and the poor, following the guidance of his religion, seeking the pleasure of his Lord, and hoping for the reward promised by Allah for this deed. The reward for helping widows and the poor is even greater than that for fasting and standing at night in prayer, or for fighting in *jihād* for the sake of Allah, as the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "'The one who strives to help the widow and the poor is like the one who fights in *jihād* for the sake of Allah.' And I [the narrator] believe he also said, 'and like the one who stands at night in prayer without rest and fasts continually without breaking his fast.'" [Agreed upon]

These are the ways in which the generous Muslim may spend his wealth in hopes of earning the pleasure and reward of Allah. These are righteous deeds that will bring the servant closer to his Lord. This does not include the feasts on which rich people spend huge amounts of money for the purpose of fame, glory and some transient benefit. The Prophet (SAAS) condemned such feasts, because they are not done for the sake of Allah:

> "How bad is the food of a feast to which the rich are invited and from which the poor are excluded." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

Striving to help widows and the poor, and sponsoring and taking care of orphans, not only bring a great reward; these deeds also purify the soul of the giver, enhance his humanity, soften his heart, make him enjoy the sweetness of giving and compassion, and make him happy to do good deeds. So the Prophet (SAAS) used to teach hard-hearted people to do good, so that their hearts would be softened and filled with compassion. Abū Hurayrah (RA)

reported that a man complained of his hard-heartedness to the Prophet (SAAS), so he told him:

"Pat the head of the orphan, and feed the poor."[1]

He does not remind the beneficiaries of his charity

The true Muslim whom Allah has enabled to give and spend for His sake, does not remind people of what he has given. He is keen to be one of those whom Allah has described in the Qur'ān:

> **"Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury - for them their reward is with their Lord; on them shall be no fear; nor shall they grieve."**
> [*al-Baqarah* 2:262]

The Muslim does not forget that there is nothing more likely to cancel out good deeds and destroy the reward of charity than reminding others of it or harming them. Allah warns the believers against these deeds in such a way that the believer is shaken and would not even think of reminding others of his charity or harming them:

> **"O you who believe! Cancel not your charity by reminders of your generosity or by injury. . ."**
> [*al-Baqarah* 2:264]

Reminding the poor man whom need has compelled to accept aid from others is humiliating and disrespectful. It is forbidden by Islam, which counts the one who gives and the one who takes as

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[1]Reported by Ahmad; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

brothers, between whom there is no difference except in their *taqwā* and good deeds. A brother does not remind his brother of his charity; he does not humiliate him or cause him to lose face. In a *hadīth* narrated by Muslim from Abū Dharr, the Prophet (SAAS) issued a strong warning to those who remind others of their charity, and counted them among those doomed souls to whom Allah will not even speak on the Day of Resurrection:

> "There are three to whom Allah will not speak on the Day of Resurrection, nor look at, nor commend them, and their will be a severe punishment." The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) repeated this three times. Abū Dharr said: "They are truly lost and doomed. Who are they, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "The one who lets his garment trail below his ankles (out of pride), the one reminds people of his charity, and the one who sells his goods by means of making false oaths."

He is hospitable

The true Muslim whose soul is filled with generosity will naturally be hospitable, welcoming his guest warmly and cheerfully hastening to honour him, acting upon the Islamic attitude which is deeply rooted in his heart and which is based on belief in Allah and the Last Day:

> "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest." [Agreed upon]

The one who honours his guest thus confirms that he is a believer in Allah and the Last Day. Therefore this honouring of the guest is called a reward that is given to the guest as if thanking him for

the opportunity he has given to his host to do a good deed, put his faith into practice, and please Allah:

> "'Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his guest by giving him his reward.' They asked, 'What is his reward, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'One day and one night. The right of hospitality is three days, and anything beyond that is an act of charity.'" [Agreed upon]

Honouring guests is regarded in Islam as a great deed which is encouraged, and for which the sincere Muslim will be rewarded. But Islam regulated it and set limits for it. The "reward" of the guest is one day and one night, then comes the duty of hospitality, which is three days. Anything beyond that is an act of charity which will be recorded among the good deeds of the hospitable, generous man.

In Islam, honouring the guest is not a matter of choice to be followed or not according to one's mood or personal feelings. It is a duty on the Muslim, which he must hasten to fulfil as soon as a guest knocks on his door or enters his yard:

> "Accommodating a guest for one night is an absolute duty on every Muslim. Whoever gets up in the morning and finds a guest waiting in his yard has a duty to fulfil, and it is up to him what he will do about it."[1]

Those who do not like to receive a guest and close their doors to him are not good people, as is stated in the *hadīth* reported by Imām Aḥmad, in which the Prophet (SAAS) said:

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad.*

> "There is no goodness in the one who is not hospitable."[1]

Islam has made hospitality the duty of every Muslim, and considers it to be the guest's right. No Muslim should fall short in carrying out this duty. If a spirit of miserliness has overtaken a people to the extent that they deny their guest his right, then Islam permits the guest to take his right from them. This is seen in the *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim and others from 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir, who said:

> "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you are sending us to people who do not feed us. What do you think about this?' He said, 'If you go to a people and they order that something appropriate be brought (i.e., food and drink), then accept it, and if they do not do that, then take the things you as a guest are entitled to, that they should have provided.'"

Hospitality is a basic Islamic attitude, so you will never find a Muslim whose Islam is genuine being stingy to his guest, no matter what his circumstances. Islam has taught him that the food of two people will feed three, and that the food of three will feed four. So he need never worry about an unexpected guest knocking suddenly at his door. Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'The food of two people is enough for three, and the food of three is enough for four.'" [Agreed upon]

Jābir (RA) said:

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[1]Reported by Imām Aḥmad; its men are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'The food of one is enough for two, the food of two is enough for four, and the food of four is enough for eight." [Muslim]

The true Muslim does not worry about there being too many people at the table, unlike the Westerner who does not offer food to an unexpected guest for whom he has not prepared food in advance. The Muslim welcomes the unexpected guest and invites him to share his food, no matter that his own share may be reduced by a few mouthfuls. The true Muslim prefers hunger to ignoring the rights of this guest, whom Allah and His Messenger have commanded him to honour. Indeed, Allah will bless the food of one so that it will become enough for two, and He will bless the food of two so that it will become enough for four, and so on. There is no need for that dryness and inhospitability from which Western-influenced materialistic people are suffering in both East and West.

The righteous *salaf* set the highest example of honouring one's guest, so much so that Allah Himself commended the way in which some of them honoured their guests. An example of this is the *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim from Abū Hurayrah (RA). A man came to the Prophet (SAAS) and he sent word to his wives (to prepare food). They said, "We have nothing but water." So the Prophet (SAAS) said, "Who will play host to this man?" One of the *Anṣār* said: "I will." So he took the man to his wife and told her: "Honour the guest of the Messenger of Allah." She said, "We do not have anything but the children's food." He said, "Prepare the food, light the lamp, and put the children to sleep if they want some supper." So she prepared the food, lit the lamp, and put the children to sleep. Then she got up as if to adjust the lamp, but she extinguished it. The couple pretended to eat (with their guest), but in fact they went to bed hungry. The next

morning, the *Anṣārī* went to the Prophet (SAAS), who told him: "Allah has commended what you two did last night." Allah revealed: **". . . But [they] give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls - they are the ones that achieve prosperity."** [*al-Ḥashr* 59:9]

The Muslim should also be smart and aware. If he is a guest, he should take note of his brother's circumstances and not stay relaxing in a way that might cause embarrassment or annoyance to his host. The Prophet (SAAS) taught the Muslim not to be such a burden on his host, as this is against the spirit of Islam. Imām Muslim reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "The Muslim is not permitted to stay so long as a guest with his brother that he makes him fall into sin." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, how could he make him fall into sin?" He said, "By staying with him when he has no food to offer him."

According to a report given by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "It is not permitted for him to stay with him so long that he embarrasses him."

Whether it is a sin or an embarrassment, the true Muslim does not expose his hospitable brother to it.

The true Muslim is a well-mannered guest, following the wise teachings of Islam concerning the behaviour of a guest. He avoids being a burden on his host, and responds politely to his invitations and directions.

He prefers others to himself

The true Muslim prefers others to himself, even if he is poor, because Islam teaches its followers to do so. This altruism is a basic characteristic of the true Muslim, which distinguishes him from other people.

The *Ansār*, may Allah be pleased with them, were the first pioneers in altruism after the Prophet (SAAS) himself. A verse of the Qur'ān was revealed commending their unique selflessness, which would remain for all time a shining example to humanity of how generosity and altruism should be. They welcomed their *Muhājir* brothers, who had nothing, and gave them everything (see pp.177-179):

> **"But those who before them, had homes (in Madīnah) and had adopted the Faith - show their affection to such as came to them for refuge, and entertain no desire in their hearts for things given to the (latter), but give them preference over themselves, even though poverty was their (own lot). And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls - they are the ones that achieve prosperity."**
> [*al-Hashr* 59:9]

The life of the Prophet (SAAS) abounds with altruism, and he also instilled this attitude in the hearts of the first Muslims. Sahl ibn Sa'd (RA) reported:

> "A woman brought a woven garment (*burdah*) and said, 'I wove it with my own hands for you to wear.' The Prophet (SAAS) took it, as he needed it. He came out to us, wearing it wrapped around

> his waist. So-and-so said, 'Give it to me, how nice it is!' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Fine.' The Prophet (SAAS) was sitting in a gathering, and when he came back, he folded up the *burdah* and sent it to that man. The people told the man: 'You should not have done that. The Prophet (SAAS) wore it because he needed it, then you asked for it and you knew that he does not refuse requests.' He said, 'I did not ask for it so that I could wear it. I asked for it so that it could be my shroud.'" Sahl said: "And (later on) it was his shroud." [al-Bukhārī]

The Prophet (SAAS) used to feel happy whenever he saw his teaching of altruism bearing fruits in the Muslims' lives when there was some crisis such as drought or famine. This is seen in his words:

> "When a number of their men are killed in battle, or they do not have enough food for their children, the Ash'arīs [a tribe] gather whatever they have in one cloth and share it out equally. They belong to me and I belong to them." [Agreed upon]

He helps to alleviate the burden of the debtor

The true Muslim is tolerant, easy-going and treats others kindly. He hastens to alleviate the burden of the debtor, as the Qur'ān tells him:

> **"If the debtor is in a difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay . . ."**
> [*al-Baqarah* 2:280]

Islam wants the Muslim to be a human being before he is a creditor. So if he feels that his brother who is in debt is suffering some hardship, he recognizes his situation and makes some allowances for him. He postpones the date of payment until his brother is able to pay the debt, or he writes off a part of it. By doing this, he is obeying the commands of his Lord and performing a righteous deed which will save him from the hardships of the Day of Resurrection and shade him in the shade of the almighty Throne of Allah.

Abū Qutādah (RA) said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'Whoever would like Allah to save him from the hardship of the Day of Resurrection, let him alleviate the burden of a debtor[1] or write off (part of the debt)." [Muslim]

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Whoever allows a debtor to postpone payment, or writes off a part of the debt, Allah will place him under the shade of His Throne on the Day of Resurrection, the Day when there will be no shade except His."[2]

There are many *aḥādīth* on this topic, all of which confirm that a person's lenience towards a debtor will not be wasted in the sight of Allah. It will be entered in the record of his good deeds, and Allah the Most Generous will compensate him for forgoing his

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[1] i.e., by postponing the payment, if he is the one to whom it is owed, or by paying off the debt for him. [Author]

[2] Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

brother's debt by giving him something better. His shortcomings will be compensated for and he will be saved from the horrifying events of the Day when mankind is resurrected to meet the Lord of the Worlds.

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'There was a man who used to lend money to the people. He used to tell his employee: "If you come across any debtor who is in difficulty, let him off. Perhaps Allah will let us off." So when he met Allah, He let him off.'" [Agreed upon]

Abū Mas'ūd al-Badrī (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'A man from among those who were before you was called to account, and no good deeds were found in his record except that he used to have dealings with the people, and he was rich, so he used to tell his employees to let off those debtors who were in difficulty. Allah, may He be glorified, said: "We should be more generous than he, so let him off."'" [Muslim]

Hudhayfah (RA) said:

> "Allah brought to account one of His servants to whom He had given wealth, and asked him: 'What did you do in the *dunyā*?' He said - and no-one can hide a single thing from Allah - 'O my Lord, you gave me wealth, and I used to trade with people. It was my habit to be lenient; I would be easy-going

> with the one who could afford to pay his debt, and I would allow the one who was in difficulty to postpone payment.' Allah said, 'I should be more generous than you; let My servant off.'" 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir and Abū Mas'ūd al-Anṣārī said: "We heard something like this from the mouth of the Messenger of Allah (SAAS)." [Muslim]

He is proud and does not beg

The true Muslim is proud and independent, and does not think of begging. If some hardship befalls him, he bears it with patience and tries harder. He strives to avoid becoming one who relies on the generosity of those who do good, because Islam teaches him to consider himself above doing such a thing, and urges him to be proud, independent and patient - then Allah will help him and give him independence and patience:

> "Whoever refrains from asking from people, Allah will help him. Whoever tries to be independent, Allah will enrich him. Whoever tries to be patient, Allah will give him patience, and no-one is given a better or vaster gift than patience."[1]

Islam gave the poor some rights over the wealth of the rich, who should give freely without reminders or insults. But at the same time, Islam wants the poor to be independent and not rely on this right. The higher hand is better than the lower hand, so the true Muslim should always work so that his hand will not be the lower one. That is more befitting and more honouring to him. So those who have little should increase their efforts and not be dependent on charity and hand-outs. This will save them from losing face.

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[1] Reported by Mālik in *al-Muwaṭṭā'*, and also by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

Whenever he spoke from the *minbar* about charity and refraining from begging, the Prophet (SAAS) would remind the Muslims that "the higher hand is better than the lower; the higher hand is the one that spends, while the lower hand is the one that begs."[1]

He is friendly and likeable

The Muslim who truly understands the teachings of his religion is gentle, friendly and likeable. He mixes with people and gets along with them. This is something which should be a characteristic of the Muslim who understands that keeping in touch with people and earning their trust is one of the most important duties of the Muslim. It is an effective means of conveying the message of truth to them, and exposing them to its moral values, because people only listen to those whom they like, trust and accept. Hence there are many *ahādīth* which commend the type of person who is friendly and liked by others. Such a person is one of those chosen ones who are beloved by the Prophet (SAAS) and will be closest to him on the Day of Resurrection:

> "Shall I not tell you who among you is most beloved to me and will be closest to me on the Day of Resurrection?" He repeated it two or three times, and they said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said: "Those of you who are the best in attitude and character."[2] Some reports add: "Those who are down to earth and humble, who get along with others and with whom others feel comfortable."

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[1]Reported by Mālik in *al-Muwaṭṭā'*, and also by al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

[2]Reported by Ahmad; its *isnād* is *jayyid*.

One of the attributes of the believer is that he gets along with others and others feel comfortable with him. He likes people and they like him. If he is not like this, then he will not be able to convey the message or achieve anything of significance. Whoever is like that has no goodness in him, as in the *hadīth*:

> "The believer gets along with people and they feel comfortable with him. There is no goodness in the one who does not get along with people and with whom they do not feel comfortable."[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) set the highest example of good behaviour towards people. He was skilful in softening their hearts and called them to follow him in word and deed. He demonstrated how to reach people's hearts and win their love and admiration. He was always cheerful and easy-going, never harsh. When he came to any gathering, he would sit wherever there was a free space, and he told others to do likewise. He treated everyone equally, so that no-one who was present in a gathering would feel that anyone else was receiving preferential treatment. If anyone came to him and asked for something, he would give it to them, or at least respond with kind words. His good attitude extended to everyone and he was like a father to them. The people gathered around him were truly equal, distinguished only by their level of *taqwā*. They were humble, respecting their elders, showing compassion to young ones, giving priority to those in need and taking care of strangers.

The Prophet (SAAS) never used to disappoint anyone who came to ask from him. There are three characteristics that he did not possess: he was not argumentative, he did not talk too much, and he did not concern himself with matters that were not his business.

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[1]Reported by Ahmad and al-Bazār; the men of Ahmad's *isnād* are *rijāl al-ṣaḥīḥ*.

There are three things that he never did to people: he never criticized any one, he never said "Shame on you!" to anyone, and he never looked for anyone's faults. He never said anything but that for which he hoped to earn reward. When he spoke, the people around him would listen earnestly, sitting still as if there were birds on their heads. When he was silent, then they would speak. They never argued with one another in his presence. They would smile at whatever he smiled at, and would be impressed by whatever impressed him. He would be patient with a stranger who might be harsh in his requests or questions, and his Companions would ask the stranger to speak gently. He said, "If you see someone in need, then help him." He never accepted praise except from someone who was thanking him for a favour, and he never cut off anyone who was speaking; he would wait until the person indicated that he had finished, or stood up.

'Ā'ishah (RA) tells us that he used to be cautious of the worst type of people, and he would speak gently to them and treat them well. A man sought permission to enter upon him and he said, "Let him in, what a bad brother of his tribe he is!" When the man came in, he spoke gently to him. 'Ā'ishah said" "O Messenger of Allah, you said what you said, then you spoke gently to him." He said, "O 'Ā'ishah, the worst of people is the one whom people avoid (or are gentle towards) because they fear his slander."
[al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

The true Muslim follows in the footsteps of his Prophet (SAAS) in his dealings with all people, whether they are good or bad, so that he is liked and accepted by all people.

He checks his customs and habits against Islamic standards

One of the most important distinguishing characteristics of the true Muslim is that he measures every known custom of his

society against the standards of Islam. Thus all of his social values are derived from his understanding of the basic principles of his religion.

So he does not wear gold, because this is forbidden for men. The Prophet (SAAS) announced this when he saw a man wearing a gold ring and said:

> "Would any of you take a burning coal and place it on his hand?" [Muslim]

Then he took the ring from the man's finger and threw it aside. The man then demonstrated a marvellous attitude of obedience to Allah and His Mesenger. His companions told him: "Pick up your ring and benefit from its value (i.e., sell it)." But he said, "No, by Allah. I will never pick up anything that the Prophet (SAAS) has thrown away."

The true Muslim does not eat or drink from vessels of gold or silver, and he does not wear silk or brocade, because the Prophet (SAAS) forbade doing so. This is reported in many *aḥādīth*, for example the *ḥadīth* of Ḥudhayfah (RA):

> "The Prophet (SAAS) forbade us to wear silk or brocade, or to drink from vessels of gold and silver. He said, 'These are for them in this world, and for you in the Hereafter.'" [Agreed upon]

Umm Salamah (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever drinks from a vessel of silver, it is as if he is throwing Hell-fire into his stomach." [Agreed upon]

According to a report given by Muslim, the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whoever eats or drinks from vessels of gold or silver" - (in another report: whoever drinks from a vessel of gold or silver) - " it is as if he is throwing fire from Hell into his stomach."

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'The one who wears silk is one who has no share in the Hereafter." [al-Bukhārī]

'Ali (RA) said:

> "I saw the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) hold silk in his right hand and gold in his left, and he said: 'These two are forbidden for the men of my *ummah*.'"[1]

Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Wearing silk and gold is forbidden for the men of my *ummah* but is permitted for the women."[2]

Ḥudhayfah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) forbade us to drink or eat from vessels of gold and silver, or to wear or sit upon silk and brocade." [al-Bukhārī]

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd with a *ḥasan isnād*.

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

The true Muslim denies these things to himself in obedience to the command of the Prophet (SAAS), without necessarily understanding the reason for this prohibition, be it social, psychological or economical, because in matters of *halāl* and *harām* he is guided by the Qur'ānic principle:

> **" . . . So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you . . . "** [*al-Hashr* 59:7]

The true Muslim does not follow so-called "fashions" in customs surrounding engagements and weddings, which we have adopted blindly from the West without thinking, such as wearing the engagement ring on the right hand then transferring it to the left hand on the wedding night, or allowing a non-*mahram* photographer to take souvenir photos of the bride and groom. These and other customs have been adopted by our societies that have been overwhelmed by cultural imperialism and have become distorted copies of Western societies, although they think that they still belong completely to the world of Islam.

Other habits which Muslims should discard include having pictures and statues in the house, and keeping a dog at home (unless it is a guard dog). Islam is strongly opposed to these practices, and several *ahādīth* expressly forbid the believers to adopt them.

Ibn 'Umar (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Those who make these images will be punished on the Day of Resurrection and will be told: 'Give life to that which you have created.'"
> [Agreed upon]

‘Ā’ishah (RA) said:

> “The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) returned from a journey, and I had covered a small window with a curtain that had images on it. When the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) saw it, his face changed colour (with anger) and he said, ‘O ‘Ā’ishah! Those who will be the most severely punished by Allah on the Day of Resurrection will be those who imitated the creation of Allah.’ She said: So we cut it up and made one or two pillows from it.” [Agreed upon]

Ibn ‘Abbās (RA) said:

> “I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: ‘Every maker of images will be in the Fire; every image that he made will be brought to life and will punish him in Hell.” Ibn ‘Abbās said: “So if you must do that, make pictures of trees and inanimate objects.” [Agreed upon]

Abū Ṭalḥah (RA) said that the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said:

> “The angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or an image.” [Agreed upon]

‘Ā’ishah (RA) said:

> “Jibrīl (AS) promised to come to the Prophet (SAAS) at a certain time. That time came and went, and he did not come. The Prophet (SAAS) was holding a stick in his hand, which he threw aside, saying, ‘Allah does not break His promise to His Messengers.’ Then he turned around and saw

> a puppy underneath his bed. He said, 'When did this dog get in?' I said, 'By Allah, I did not even notice it.' He gave orders that it should be taken out, and it was removed. Then Jibrīl (AS) came to him, and the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said, 'You promised to come and I was waiting for you, but you did not come.' He said, 'The dog that was in your house prevented me. We do not enter a house where there is a dog or an image.'" [Muslim]

There are many *aḥādīth* which prohibit pictures and statues, and the wisdom behind this prohibition is apparent especially nowadays when hypocrites, sycophants and those possessed by greed and ambition encourage tyrants in their oppression. One of their favoured methods is to erect statues to them, both during their lifetime and after their death, thus turning them into gods and demigods seated on thrones of glory, whipping the backs of the oppressed.

Islam brought the doctrine of *Tawḥīd*, and destroyed the statues of *shirk* and *jāhiliyyah* fifteen hundred years ago. It will not permit these graven imgaes to come back into the lives of the Muslims, whether it be in the name of commemorating a leader, honouring an artist or glorifying a scientist, poet or writer. The Islamic society is a monotheistic society where glorification, sanctification and veneration are only for Allah. So there is no room in the Islamic society for these statues and images.

As far as keeping a dog is concerned, there is nothing wrong with that if the dog is kept for hunting or farming purposes, as in the *ḥadīth* of Ibn 'Umar (RA), who said:

> "I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) say: 'Whoever keeps a dog, unless it is a dog for hunting or herding livestock, his reward will decrease by two *qīrāts* every day.'" [Agreed upon]

Keeping dogs in the house after the Western fashion, spoiling them, manufacturing special food and shampoo for them, setting up "beauty parlours" for them and all the other things on which people in the West and the U.S. spend billions of dollars annually... All of this has nothing whatsoever to do with Islam and its tolerant customs. The psychological state of Westerners, and the dry, materialistic life they lead, had driven them to these extremes in caring for their dogs, to compensate for the lack of human love in their social lives. But the social life of Islam is filled with human emotion, so Muslims have no need to go to such absurd extremes.

He follows Islamic manners in the way he eats and drinks

One of the most important characteristics of the true Muslim is his etiquette with regard to food and drink. If he is present in a gathering where food is served, you would know him from his good manners, which the Prophet (SAAS) taught and encouraged every Muslim to adopt.

He does not begin to eat until he has mentioned the name of Allah, and he eats with his right hand from the food directly in front of him[1], according to the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS):

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[1]The custom at the time of the Prophet (SAAS) was for all present to eat from one dish or platter; this is still the custom in some Muslim countries [Translator].

> "Mention the name of Allah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you." [Agreed upon]

If he forgets to mention the name of Allah at the beginning of his meal, he will rectify that by saying: "*Bismillahi awwalahu wa ākhirahu* (in the name of Allah at its beginning and at its end)," as is taught in the *hadīth* narrated by 'Ā'ishah (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Whenever any of you eats, let him mention the name of Allah *ta'ālā*. If he forgets to mention the name of Allah at the beginning, let him say "*Bismillahi awwalahu wa ākhirahu.*"'"[1]

The Prophet (SAAS) was very concerned about mentioning the name of Allah over food, because there is much goodness in this for those who are eating. It repels the Shaytān and his evil both from the food and from the one who is eating. Hudhayfah (RA) said:

> "Whenever we had a meal with the Messenger of Allah (SAAS), none of us would reach out for the food until the Messenger of Allah did so. Once, we were going to eat with him, and a young girl came rushing as if someone were pushing her. She reached out her hand towards the food, and the Messenger of Allah took hold of her hand. Then a Bedouin came, rushing as if someone were pushing him. He reached out for the food, and the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) took hold of his hand,

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Timidhī, who said it is a *hasan sahīh hadīth*.

> then said: 'The Shayṭān has access to food over which the name of Allah has not been mentioned. He (the Shayṭān) brought this young girl so that he could have access to the food through her, and I took hold of her hand. Then he brought this Bedouin so that he could have access to the food through him, and I took hold of his hand. By the One in Whose hand is my soul, the Shayṭān's hand is in mine, along with their hands.' Then he mentioned the name of Allah and began to eat." [Muslim]

The second issue is eating with the right hand. The Muslim who is acting according to Islamic manners eats and drinks with his right hand. The commandment to eat with the right hand, and the prohibition of eating with the left hand, are clearly reported in numerous *aḥādīth*, for example:

> "When any one of you eats, let him eat with his right hand, and if he drinks, let him drink with his right hand, for the Shayṭān eats with his left hand." [Muslim]

> "None of you should eat with his left hand or drink with his left hand, for the Shayṭān eats with his left hand and drinks with his left hand." Nāfi' added that the Prophet (SAAS) said: "Do not give or take with it (the left hand)." [Muslim]

If the Prophet (SAAS) saw anyone eating with his left hand, he would tell him to stop, and would teach him the proper manners. If the person arrogantly persisted, he would rebuke him more sternly and pray against him. Salamah ibn al-Akwa' (RA) said that a man ate with his left hand in the presence of the Prophet

(SAAS). He said, "Eat with your right hand." The man said, "I cannot." He said, "May you never be able to use it!" The only thing that stopped him was arrogance, and he never raised his right hand to his mouth after that. [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) always liked to start things from the right, and he encouraged others to do likewise. Al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Mālik report from Anas that the Prophet (SAAS) was given some milk that had been mixed with water from the well. There was a Bedouin sitting on his right, and Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq was sitting on his left. He drank some of the milk, then he passed it to the Bedouin and said:

> "Start on the right and pass to the right."

On one occasion, he asked a young boy[1] seated on his right to give up his turn for some elders, but the boy insisted on taking his turn and obtaining *barakah* (blessing) from the left-overs of the Prophet (SAAS), and the Prophet (SAAS) did not criticize or rebuke him for doing so. Suhayl ibn Sa'd (RA) described the incident:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) was given something to drink, and he drank some of it. There was a young boy on his right, and some old men on his left. He asked the boy, 'Will you let me give some to these man?' The boy said, 'No, by Allah, I will not give up my share from you to anyone.' So the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) put it in his hand." [Agreed upon]

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[1]This was Ibn 'Abbās [Author].

There are many such reports and texts that definitively show that using the right hand is an important aspect of Islamic manners, which the true Muslim adopts readily and does not try to find excuses. This is what the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* used to do, without exception. When 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA) was the *khalīfah*, he used to patrol the city himself and check up on the people. Once, he saw a man eating with his left hand, so he told him, "O servant of Allah, eat with your right hand." He saw him a second time eating with his left hand, so he hit him with his whip and said, "O servant of Allah, eat with your right hand." He saw him a third time eating with his left hand, so he hit him with his whip and said angrily, "O servant of Allah, your right hand!" The man replied, "O *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, it is busy." 'Umar said, "What is keeping it busy?" He said, "The day of Mu'tah[1]." 'Umar began to weep, and came to the man apologizing and consoling him. He asked him, "Who helps you make *wuḍū*? Who helps you with what you need?" Then he ordered that the man should be treated fairly and taken care of.

'Umar's concern for this aspect of the conduct of one of the people demonstrates the importance of this apparently minor issue. It is indicative of the Muslim's personality and unique identity. 'Umar was very keen to apply this rule to the Muslims, so he did not allow them to take it lightly or ignore it.

I would like to address this to those Muslims who have adopted Western table manners which dictate that the fork should be held in the left hand, and the knife in the right, so that the food is cut with the right hand and placed in the mouth with the left. These people follow this practice without adjusting it, so that they are eating with their left hands, contradictory to the teachings of their religion. They do not bother to move the fork to the right hand

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[1] i.e., he lost his hand in the battle of Mu'tah. [Author]

and the knife to the left, so that they may eat with their right hand, because they do not want to change this Western "etiquette." This is just one example of the moral defeat from which our *ummah* is suffering at the hands of modernism, which we are following slavishly without adjusting or adapting foreign customs to suit our own identity, religion and values. The true Muslim should be the furthest removed from such blind, ignorant imitation.

The true Muslim who is proud of his religion and its noble guidance in all aspects of life insists on eating with his right hand and calls on others to do likewise. He is not ashamed to announce it in gatherings where people still adhere literally to practices that have come from the West, so that he may explain it to those who are ignorant and careless, and bring them back to their senses. Then they will follow the *sunnah* and eat and drink with their right hands.

With regard to the third issue, eating from what is nearest to one, this is in accordance with the Islamic manners of eating. The Prophet (SAAS) clearly commanded this, along with mentioning the name of Allah and eating with the right hand. It is recorded in numerous *ahādīth*, such as the report of 'Umar ibn Abī Salamah (RA), who said:

> "I was a young boy under the care of the Messenger of Allah (SAAS). My hand used to wander all over the plate, so the Prophet (SAAS) told me: 'O young boy, mention the name of Allah, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is directly in front of you.'" [Agreed upon]

When the Muslim eats with his hand, he does so in a nice, good-mannered fashion, as the Prophet (SAAS) used to do. He used to eat with just three fingers; he did not plunge his whole hand into

the food in a way that would put others off. This was reported by Ka'b ibn Mālik:

> "I saw the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) eating with three fingers, and when he had finished he would lick them." [Muslim]

The Prophet (SAAS) commanded people to lick their fingers and clean their plates, as Jābir (RA) reported that he said:

> "You do not know where in the food is the blessing." [Muslim]

Anas (RA) said:

> "When the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) ate, he would lick his three fingers. He said: 'If any of you drops a mouthful, let him pick it up, remove the dirt, and eat it, and not leave it for the Shayṭān.' He commanded us to clean our plates and said: 'You do not know in which part of your food is the blessing.'" [Muslim]

Besides seeking the blessing in the food, this Prophetic teaching also encourages Muslims to clean their hands and their plates. Cleaning them of whatever food is left befits the man who is clean and well mannered, and is indicative of his sensitivity and good taste. The West has now adopted this good practice which was commanded by the Prophet (SAAS) fifteen hundred years ago: nowadays the Europeans clear their plates and do not leave anything.

Of course, the sensitive, well-mannered Muslim does not eat noisily, making disgusting sounds, nor does he take large

mouthfuls such as would cause him to make a revolting spectacle of himself.

When he has finished eating, he praises Allah as the Prophet (SAAS) taught us to do, thanking Allah for His blessing and seeking the reward of those who give praise and thanks.

Abu Umāmah (RA) said that when the Prophet (SAAS) finished his meal, he would say:

> "*Al-ḥamdu lillāhi kathīran ṭayyiban mubārakan fīhi, ghayra makfiyyin wa lā muwadda'in wa lā mustaghnan 'anhu, rabbanā* (Praise be to Allah, much good and blessed praise. O our Lord, we cannot compensate You favour, nor leave it nor dispense with it)." [al-Bukhārī]

Mu'ādh ibn Anas (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Whoever eats a meal then says *Al-ḥamdu lillāhi alladhī aṭ'amanā hadhā wa razaqanīhi min ghayri ḥawlin minnī wa la quwwatin* (Praise be to Allah Who fed me and bestowed this provision upon me with no power or ability on my part)', will be forgiven for the sins committed prior to it."[1]

The well-mannered Muslim does not criticize food, no matter what it is, following the teaching and example of the Prophet (SAAS). Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

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[1]Reported by Abu Dāwud and al-Tirmidhī , who said it is a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) never criticized food. If he liked it, he ate it, and if he did not like it, he left it." [Agreed upon]

The Muslim's manners with regard to drinking are also derived from the teachings of Islam, which impart good manners to man in every aspect of life.

After mentioning the name of Allah, he drinks in two or three draughts. He does not breathe into the cup, nor does he drink from the mouth of the jug or bottle if he can help it. He should not breathe into his drink, and he should drink sitting down if he can.

Drinking in two or three draughts is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do, as Anas (RA) reported:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to breathe three times[1] when drinking ." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) discouraged drinking in one draught:

> "Do not drink in one draught like camels do; drink in two or three. Mention the name of Allah when you drink, and give praise to Him when you finish drinking."[2]

The Prophet (SAAS) forbade blowing into one's drink, as is mentioned in the *ḥadīth* of Abu Sa'īd al-Khudrī:

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[1]i.e., he would pause and take a breath outside the cup. [Author]

[2]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

> "A man said, 'I see some dirt in it.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Then pour it out.' He said, 'One draught is not enough for me.' The Prophet (SAAS) said, 'Take the cup away from your mouth, then take a breath.'"[1]

The *aḥādīth* on the manners of drinking make it clear that it is better for the well-mannered Muslim to avoid drinking from the mouth of the bottle or jug if he can, and to drink sitting down if possible. This is preferable, but drinking from the mouth of the jug or while standing are permitted, because the Prophet (SAAS) did so on occasion.

Spreading the greeting of *salām*

One of the distinctive aspects of the Muslim's social conduct is his use of the greeting of *salām*. In Islam, greeting with *salām* is not regarded as being the matter of a social custom defined by men, which may be changed and adapted according to time and circumstances. Greeting with *salām* is a clearly defined etiquette which has been commanded by Almighty Allah in His Book, and rules and regulations concerning this greeting have been set out in numerous *aḥādīth* to which the scholars of *ḥadīth* devoted an entire chapter called *kitāb al-salām* or *bāb al-salām*.

Allah commanded the Muslims to greet one another with *salām* in clear, definitive terms in the Qur'ān:

> **"O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and saluted those in them . . ."** [*al-Nūr* 24:27]

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[1]Reported by Imām Mālik and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth*.

Allah commanded the Muslims to return the greeting with something similar or something better, hence it is an obligation on the one who hears a greeting to return it, and not to ignore it:

> **"When a (courteous) greeting is offered you, meet it with a greeting still more courteous, or (at least) of equal courtesy . . . "** [*al-Nisā'* 4:86]

The Prophet (SAAS) strongly encouraged the Muslims to spread *salām* and to greet those they know and those they do not know. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ (RA) said:

> "A man asked the Prophet (SAAS), 'Which type of Islam is the best?' He said, 'To feed people, and to say *salām* to those you know and those you do not know.'" [Agreed upon]

Greeting with *salām* is one of the seven things which the Prophet (SAAS) commanded his Companions, and the Muslim *ummah* after them, to adhere to. They were listed by al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) commanded us to do seven things: to visit the sick, to attend funerals, to bless someone when he sneezes, to support the weak, to help the one who is oppressed, to spread *salām*, and to help people fulfil their oaths." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) placed great emphasis on *salām* and encouraged Muslims to use this greeting in many *aḥādīth*, because he understood its effects in spreading brotherly love and strengthening the ties of love, closeness and friendship between individuals and groups. He described it as something which would

lead to love, and love would lead to faith, and faith would lead to Paradise:

> "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, you will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love one another. Shall I not tell you of something which if you do it, you will love one another? Spread *salām* amongst yourselves." [Muslim]

He (SAAS) also said that the one who initiated the greeting would be closer to Allah and more deserving of His pleasure, favour and blessing:

> "The closest of the people to Allah is the one who starts the greeting of *salām*."[1]

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (RA) used to go to the market in the morning, and he did not pass by anybody without saying *salām* to him. One day he was asked, "What do you do in the market, when you do not sell anything, or ask about prices, or haggle, or join any gatherings?" He said, "We go there in the morning for the purpose of saying *salām* to whoever we meet."[2]

There is only one form of the greeting, which the Muslim who is aware of Islamic manners adheres to. It is: "*al-salāmu 'alaykum wa raḥmatullahi wa barakātuhu* (peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah)." He says it like this - in the plural

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwud with a *jayyid isnād*; al-Tirmidhī narrated a similar report and described it as a *ḥasan ḥadīth*.

[2]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

form - even if he is greeting only one person. The response is: "*wa alaykum al-salām 'wa rahmatullahi wa barakātuhu.*"[1]

This correct Islamic greeting should not be replaced by other greetings, such as the old-fashioned Arabic greeting "*'im sabāhan,*" or modern greetings such as "*sabāh al-khayr,*" "good morning," or "*bonjour*" (in Arabic, English and French, respectively), and other usages which are spreading in the Muslim societies that have deviated from the guidance of Islam.

This Islamic greeting is the greeting which Allah chose for His creation from the time of Adam, to whom He taught it and commanded him to greet the angels with it. He wanted Adam's descendents in all times and places to use this greeting, because of its meaning of peace which is something most beloved by man regardless of where or when he lives. This divinely-ordained greeting is preserved nowhere except in the *ummah* of Islam which has adhered to the true way and has not changed it or deviated from it. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "When Allah created Adam (AS), He told him, 'Go and greet those' - a group of angels who were sitting - 'and listen to how they greet you, for it will be your greeting and that of your descendents. So he said: '*al-salāmu 'alaykum,*' and they responded, '*wa 'alayka al-salāmu wa rahmatullah.*' They added '*wa rahmatullah.*'" [Agreed upon]

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[1]The greeting should always be spoken in Arabic, regardless of whatever one's native tongue is or whatever language is being spoken at any given time. [Translator]

No wonder this form is such a blessed greeting, for it comes from Allah, Who commanded us to adopt it as our greeting and never to replace it with anything else:

> **" . . .But if you enter houses, salute each other - a greeting or blessing and purity as from Allah . . ."** [*al-Nūr* 24:61]

Therefore Jibrīl (AS) used this form of the greeting when he sent *salām* to 'Ā'ishah (RA), and she used the same form in returning the greeting. This is reported in the *ḥadīth* from 'Ā'ishah (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) told me: 'This is Jibrīl who is saying *salām* to you.' She said, I said: '*Wa 'alayhi al-salāmu wa raḥmatullahi wa barakātuhu* (and upon him be peace and the mercy and blessings of Allah.'" [Agreed upon]

There are also rules concerning the greeting of *salām*, which the true Muslim tries to adhere to and apply properly in his own social life. These rules are summed up in the *ḥadīth* reported by al-Bukhārī and others from Abū Hurayrah (RA):

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'The one who is riding should say *salām* to the one who is walking, the one who is walking to the one who is sitting, and the smaller group to the larger group.'" [Agreed upon] A report narrated by al-Bukhārī adds the words "And the young to the old."

The greeting is given to men and women alike, as Asmā' bint Yazīd (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) passed by the

mosque one day when a group of women were sitting there and he waved his hand to them in greeting.[1]

The greeting is also to be given to children, to acquaint them with the manners of greeting and giving *salām*. It is reported that Anas (RA) passed by some children and greeted them with *salām*, then said, "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to do that." [Agreed upon]

When the greeting is given at night, it should be spoken softly and in a quiet voice, so that those who are awake might hear it without disturbing those who are asleep. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do, according to the lengthy *ḥadīth* of al-Miqdād (RA) in which he says:

> "We used to put aside the Prophet's share of the milk and he would come at night and greet us in such a way as not to wake those who were asleep, but those who were awake would hear it. So the Prophet (SAAS) came and greeted us as he usually did..." [Muslim]

Salām should be given when joining a gathering and when leaving it. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "When any one of you comes to a gathering, let him say *salām*, and when he wants to leave, let him say *salām*. The former is not more important than the latter."[2]

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[1]Reported by al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a ***ḥasan ḥadīth***.

[2]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a ***ḥasan ḥadīth***.

He does not enter a house other than his own without permission

The Muslim who is aware of the good manners prescribed by Islam does not enter a house other than his own without permission. This seeking permission is a divine commandment which is not to be evaded or ignored:

> **"O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order that you may heed (what is seemly). If you find no one in the house, enter not until permission is given to you: if you are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that you do . . .**
> **But when the children among you come of age, let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them (in age) . . ."**
> [*al-Nūr* 24:27-28, 59]

Entering people's houses can only be completely above suspicion when it is done with permission. There is no room for spying, snooping, sneaking or entering unlawfully, all of which give rise to doubts and suspicions. Seeking permission is more honest and is better for the reputation of both the visitor and his host. This is what Allah wanted for His believing servants when He commanded them to seek permission.

There are certain manners in seeking permission which Islam urges the Muslim to follow whenever he wants to visit somebody:

(1) He should not stand squarely in front of the door, but to the right or left of it. This is what the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) used to do. 'Abdullah ibn Busr, the Companion of the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Whenever the Prophet (SAAS) came to a door seeking permission to enter, he did not stand facing it; he would stand to the right or the left. If he was given permission, he would enter, otherwise he would leave."[1]

The rule of seeking permission has been given to protct privacy, as Sahl ibn Sa'd (RA) reported that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "Seeking permission has been made a rule for the sake of not seeing[2]." [Agreed upon]

Therefore the one who is seeking permission is not allowed to stand facing the door, which would allow him to see inside when the door is opened.

(2) He should say *salām* and then ask for permission. Seeking permission before saying *salām* is incorrect. This is the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS) as given in the *ḥadīth* of Rib'ī ibn Hirāsh who said:

> "A man of Banū 'Āmir told us that he had sought permission to enter upon the Prophet (SAAS), who was in a house. He said, 'Shall I get in?' The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) told his servant, 'Go

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

[2]i.e., so that the one seeking permission will not see anything that the people whose house it is do not want him to see.

> out to this person and teach him how to seek permission to enter. Tell him to say "*Al-salām 'alaykum*, may I enter?"' The man heard, so he said '*Al-salām 'alaykum*, may I enter?' Then the Prophet (SAAS) gave him permission and he entered."[1]

(3) The person who is seeking permission should identify himself clearly when asked "Who are you?" by giving his name or *kunyah*. He should not reply in vague terms, such as "It is me," as such words do not give a clear idea of the person's identity.

Jābir (RA) said: "I came to the Prophet (SAAS) and knocked at the door. He said, 'Who is this?' I answered, 'Me,' and he said, 'Me? Me?' as if he disliked this answer." [Agreed upon]

The Prophet (SAAS) thus taught us that the *sunnah* when seeking permission to enter is to state one's name clearly. This is what he and his noble companions used to do.

Abū Dharr (RA) said:

> "I went out one night and saw the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) walking on his own. I began to walk in the shadows cast by the moonlight. He turned around and saw me, so he said, 'Who is this?' and I said, 'Abū Dharr.'" [Agreed upon]

Umm Hāni' (RA) said:

> "I came to the Prophet's house while he was having *ghusl*. Fāṭimah was screening him and he

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

said, 'Who is this?' I said, 'I am Umm Hāni'"
[Agreed upon]

(4) He sould go back if he is asked to do so, without getting upset or angry. This is the commandment of Allah in the Qur'ān:

> **". . . If you are asked to go back, go back: that makes for greater purity for yourselves: and Allah knows well all that you do."**
> [*al-Nūr* 24:28]

The Prophet (SAAS) taught that permission to enter should only be sought three times, then if permission is given one may enter, otherwise one should go back. Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī (RA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'Seek permission to enter three times, then if permission is given to you, enter, otherwise go back.'" [Agreed upon]

Abū Mūsā once asked 'Umar for permission to enter, and it was not given, so he went away. 'Umar called him to come back, and they had a lengthy conversation about seeking permission and going away. It is useful to quote this conversation, to demonstrate how meticulous the *Ṣaḥābah* were in finding out the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) and in applying them. Abū Mūsā said:

> "I sought permission to enter upon 'Umar three times, and permission was not given, so I went away. 'Umar called me back and said: 'O servant of Allah, did you find it hard to be kept waiting at my door? You should know that people find it just as hard to be kept waiting at your door.' I said, 'No, I asked permission from you three times and it was not given, so I went away [and we were commanded to do this].' He said, 'From whom did

you hear this?' I said, 'I heard it from the Prophet (SAAS).' He said, 'Have you heard something from the Prophet (SAAS) that we have not heard? If you do not bring some evidence for this I will make an example of you.' So I went out until I came to a group of the *Anṣār* who were sitting in the mosque. I asked them about it and they said, 'Does anyone doubt you concerning this?' So I told them what 'Umar had said. They said, 'No one but the youngest of us will come with you.' So Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī - or Abū Mas'ūd - came with me to 'Umar, and told him, 'We went out with the Prophet (SAAS) to visit Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah. When we got there, (the Prophet (SAAS)) said *salām*, but no permission to enter was given. He said *salām* a second and a third time, but no permission was given. He said, 'We have done what we had to,' then he went away. Sa'd came after him and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, by the One Who sent you with the truth, you did not say *salām* but I heard you and returned the greeting, but I wanted to increase the number of times you said *salām* to me and my household.'"Abū Mūsā said: "By Allah, I was being honest in what I reported of the words of the Messenger of Allah. He ('Umar) said: 'I agree, but I wanted to be sure.'"
[al-Bukhārī and Muslim].

In another report narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, it states that when this *ḥadīth* was proven, 'Umar rebuked himself, as it were, by saying "Was any teaching of the Messenger of Allah hidden from me? My business in the market kept me busy."

He sits wherever he finds room in a gathering

The true Muslim is also distinguished by his good manners when he joins a gathering. These manners are derived from the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS), and make the Muslim an example of highly-developed social etiquette.

The first thing that the Muslim learns is to sit wherever there is space, and not to push through the people in order to sit at the head of the gathering. This is in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet (SAAS) which he taught his Companions to adopt when they joined his gathering.

Jābir ibn Samurah (RA) said:

> "When we came to the Prophet (SAAS), we would sit wherever we found room."[1]

The well-mannered Muslim avoids pushing between two people, and comes between them only with their permission, if it is necessary to do so. Pushing between two people without their permission is something which the Prophet (SAAS) forbade and warned against:

> "It is not permitted for a man to come between two people except with their permission."[2]

Pushing between two people, whether in a gathering or in other circumstances, is odd behaviour which Islam has made clear is disliked. Muslims are to avoid such behaviour. There are many

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[1]Reported by Abū Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *hasan hadīth*.

[2]Reported by Abu Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is a *hasan hadīth*.

aḥādīth and *āthār* (reports) to that effect, such as the report of Sa'īd al-Maqbarī who said:

> "I passed by Ibn 'Umar and there was a man with him talking to him. I stood by them, and Ibn 'Umar slapped my chest and said: 'If you find two people talking, do not stand by them and do not sit with them, until you have asked their permission.' I said, 'May Allah guide you, O Abū 'Abdul-Raḥmān! I only hoped to hear something good from you.'"[1]

If someone gets up to let him sit in his place, he should not accept. This is better and more noble, and it is closer to the practice of the *Ṣaḥābah*, may Allah be pleased with them. Ibn 'Umar (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) said: 'None of you should make another get up then sit in his place. All of you should move up and make space (for a latecomer)." If anyone stood up to give his place to him, Ibn 'Umar would never accept it. [Agreed upon]

When he joins a gathering, the Muslim conducts himself and speaks with good manners, adhering as much as possible to the example of the Prophet's behaviour with people. The Prophet (SAAS) used to give an equal share of his attention to each person present, so that no one would feel that preference was being given to anybody. He did not criticize anybody, or say "Shame on you," or seek out anybody's faults. He never said anything but that for

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[1]Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*.

which he hoped to earn reward, and he never cut off anybody who was speaking until he indicated that he had finished or stood up.[1]

He avoids yawning in a gathering as much as he can

The Muslim who is sensitive and well-mannered does not yawn in a gathering if he can help it. If the urge to yawn overtakes him, then he tries to resist it as much as possible. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) advised:

> "If any of you wants to yawn, then let him suppress it as much as possible." [al-Bukhārī and Muslim].

If the urge to yawn cannot be resisted, then he should cover his mouth with his hand, as the Prophet (SAAS) commanded:

> "If any of you yawns, let him cover his mouth with his hand so that the Shayṭān does not enter." [Muslim]

Yawning in front of others is unpleasant and off-putting. It does not befit the decent person. Therefore he must resist the urge to yawn, or at least cover his open mouth with his hand, so that the others present need not see it. The Prophet (SAAS) taught the Muslim how to behave properly in a social setting so that he will not put people off or make them feel that he is bored with them and wants to leave them or wants them to leave him.

He follows the Islamic etiquette when he sneezes

Just as Islam has defined the manners for conduct in gatherings, it has also defined the etiquette to be observed when one sneezes.

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[1]See *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1/22-23.

Islam teaches the Muslim how he should behave when he sneezes, what he should say to the one who sneezes, and how he should pray for him.

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Prophet (SAAS) said: 'Allah likes the act of sneezing and dislikes the act of yawning. When any one of you sneezes and says "*al-ḥamdu-lillah*", then he has the right to hear every Muslim say "*yarḥamuk Allah.*" But yawning is from the Shayṭān, so if any of you feels the urge to yawn, he should resist it as much as he can, for when any of you yawns, the Shayṭān laughs at him."
> [al-Bukhārī].

This simple reflex action does not occur in the Muslim's life without being regulated by certain manners which make the Muslims feel, in the depths of his heart, that this religion came to reform all issues in his like, great and small like, and to give him certain words to say which would constantly connect man to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

When he sneezes, he should say "*Al-ḥamdu lillah,*" and the one who hears him should say, "*yarḥamuk Allah.*" Then he must respond to his companion's *du'ā* by saying "*yahdīkum Allah wa yuṣliḥ bālakum* (may Allah guide you and correct your thinking)." This is the teaching of the Prophet (SAAS) according to the *ḥadīth* narrated by al-Bukhārī:

> "When any one of you sneezes, let him say '*al-ḥamdu lillah,*' and let his brother or companions say '*yarḥamuk Allah.*' And if he says '*yarḥamuk*

> *Allah,*' let the first one say, '*yahdīkum Allah wa yuṣliḥ bālakum.*'" [al-Bukhārī].

This *du'ā'*, *yarḥamuk Allah*, is said to the one who sneezes in response to his saying *al-ḥamdu lillah*. If he does not say *al-ḥamdu lillah*, then there is no obligation to respond to him in this way. The Prophet (SAAS) said:

> "When any of you sneezes and praises Allah, then respond to him [by saying *yarḥamuk Allah*], but if he does not praise Allah, then do not respond to him." [Muslim]

Anas (RA) said:

> "Two men sneezed in the presence of the Prophet (SAAS), and he responded to one of them and not the other. The one to whom he did not respond said, 'So-and-so sneezed and you responded. I sneezed and you did not respond.' He said, 'He praised Allah, but you did not.'" [Agreed upon].

Discussing these words which the Prophet (SAAS) encouraged the Muslims to say when someone sneezes highlights their ultimate aim, which is to mention and praise Allah, and to strengthen the ties of brotherhood and friendship among the Muslims. The one who sneezes praises Allah for relief from some sensitivity or irritation which he had in in his nose, and the one who hears him praise Allah prays for mercy for him, because the one who praises Allah deserves mercy. The one who sneezes then responds with a longer and more comprehensive *du'ā'* which is full of meanings of goodness, love and friendship.

Thus Islam takes these involuntary actions of Muslims and makes them into opportunities for remembering and praising Allah and reinforcing the feelings of brotherhood, love and compassion in their hearts.

Another of the good manners to be observed when sneezing is to place one's hand over one's mouth and to make as little noise as possible. This is what the Prophet (SAAS) used to do. Abū Hurayrah (RA) said,

> "When the Messenger of Allah (SAAS) sneezed, he used to place his hand or part of his garment over his mouth and thus reduce the noise he made."[1]

He does not look into other people's houses

The true Muslim does not look around the home of his host or pry into that which does not concern him. This is not the attitude of the shy, modest, well-mannered Muslim. The Prophet (SAAS) warned those who let their gaze wander in gatherings and try to see things that are none of their business, and he said that it was permissible to put their eyes out:

> "Whoever looks into someone's home without their permission, then it is permissible for the people of the house to put their eyes out." [Muslim]

[1]Reported by Abu Dāwūd and al-Tirmidhī, who said it is *hasan sahīh*.

He does not imitate women

In a sound Islamic society, the Muslim man does not look like a woman, and a Muslim woman does not look like a man. For either sex to resemble the other is *ḥarām*. In an Islamic society, both men and women have their own attributes, qualities, and role. The difference between them must always be preserved, both in external details and in their character and behaviour. Therefore Islam issued a stern warning to those men who make themselves look like women and those women who make themselves look like men.

Ibn 'Abbās (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) cursed the men who act like women and the women who act like men." In another report: "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) cursed the men who imitate women and the women who imitate men." [al-Bukhārī]

Abū Hurayrah (RA) said:

> "The Messenger of Allah (SAAS) cursed the man who dresses like a woman and the woman who dresses like a man."[1]

Nowadays in some Muslim societies, we see young men who let their hair grow so long that it is hard to tell if they are boys or girls, especially when they wear gold chains dangling over their bared chests. Then there are girls wearing tight trousers and uni-sex shirts, with bare heads and arms, looking like young men. Such spectacles are alien to the Islamic society. They have come

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[1]Reported by Abu Dāwūd, with a *ṣaḥīḥ isnād*.

from the promiscuous West and atheist East where waves of "hippiedom," existentialism, nihilism and other misguided philosophies have misled the people and diverted them from the true human nature (*fitrah*). These are the bitter fruits of this state of confusion in which young people of both sexes are stumbling, the effects of which have had an impact on us too. So at the time of decline, tribulation and misguidance, some confused men and women became like outsiders in the body of the *ummah*, alien to its genuine, unique society.

CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have described the personality of the Muslim as Islam meant it to be, and as it is defined in the Qur'ān and *ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth*. We have seen the nature of the Muslim's relationship with his Lord, the balance of body, mind and soul in his life, and his relationship with others in his society such as his parents, wife, children, relatives, neighbours, friends and brothers in faith, and all members of his society of whatever group, type or class.

From this study it is clear that the Muslim, as Islam meant him to be, is a unique and remarkable person in his attitude and conduct and in his relationships and dealings with others at all levels. Throughout his long history, man has never been given the components of a virtuous and integrated personality such as Islam has bestowed upon the Muslim through the divine guidance contained in the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

Islam does not concentrate on filling men's minds with philosophical ideas as the Greeks did, or on excessive dream-like spirituality as the Indians did, or on physical training and perfection as the Romans did, or on self-serving materialistic philosophies such as exist nowadays in both East and West. Islam drew up a balanced, integrated program for man's development, taking into account his physical, intellectual and spiritual needs, based on the sound principle that man is formed of body, mind and soul.

The personality of the Muslim is perfectly integrated and balanced, and no aspect of it is overtaken by others, as happens in other societies where man is brought up under imperfect manmade systems which all too often are governed by selfish desires, reprehensible innovations or deviant ideas. The Muslim, as has been explained in this study, is obedient to Allah, follows His guidance, seeks His protection, accepts His decrees and always seeks to please Him.

The Muslim personality is balanced. He pays due attention to his body's needs and his outward appearance, without letting it distract him from taking care of the inner characteristics, as befits man whom Allah has honoured, made His angels prostrate to him, and subjugated for his benefit all that is in heaven and earth. Rather, the Muslim is also concerned with that which will form sound intellectual development and ways of thinking, so that he will understand the nature and essence of things. He does not forget that man is not only composed of a body and a mind, but that he also possesses a soul and a spirit, and feels a longing for higher things that makes him rise above this materialistic life and scale the heights of goodness, virtue and light. Therefore he pays as much attention to his spiritual development as to his physical and intellectual development, in a precisely balanced fashion which does not concentrate on one aspect to the detriment of others.

With his parents, he is an example of sincere filial piety, good treatment, infinite compassion, utter politeness and deep gratitude.

With his wife, he is the example of good and kind treatment, intelligent handling, deep understanding of the nature and psychology of women, and proper fulfilment of his responsibilities and duties.

With his children, he is a parent who understands his great responsibility towards them which is, as well as flooding them with love and compassion, to pay attention to anything that may influence their Islamic development.

With his relatives, he maintains the ties of kinship and knows his duties toward them. He understands the high status given to relatives in Islam, which makes him keep in touch with them no matter what the circumstances.

With his neighbour, the true Muslim is an example of good treatment and consideration of others' feelings and sensitivities. He puts up with mistreatment and turns a blind eye to his neighbour's faults while taking care not to commit any such errors himself. He always adopts the Islamic attitude whereby treating neighbours well was made a basic principle of Islam, so much so that the Prophet (S) thought that Jibrīl (AS) would make his neighbour his heir. Therefore he never does anything bad to his neighbour, nor does he fail in his duty toward him; rather, he does not spare any effort to do favours for his neighbour, without expecting any favours, reward or thanks in return.

His relationship with his brothers and friends is the best and purest of relationships, for it is based on love for the sake of Allah and this pure, sincere, brotherly love derives its purity from the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Hence it became a unique network in the history of human relations.

From these strong bonds and deep love emerged a group of the best attitudes and characteristics, which make the true Muslim a wonderful example of humanity, in whom are embodied the values and morals of Islam. He is loving, not cold, toward his brothers and friends; he is loyal and does not betray them; he is sincere and does not cheat them; he is gentle and never harsh; he is

tolerant and forgiving, and does not bear a grudge or stab in the back; he is generous and prefers others to himself, and he prays for them in their absence.

In his social relationships with all people, he is well-mannered, civil and noble, characterized by the attitudes which Islam encourages. These are not the matter of superficial politeness which conceals ulterior intentions, aims and goals. Rather it is the ongoing good behaviour which is taught in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and which Islam has made a religious duty for which man will be brought to account.

The Muslim is truthful and sincere with all people. He does not cheat, deceive or betray. He does not envy others. He fulfils his promises. He had the attitude of shyness. He is tolerant and forgiving. He is cheerful. He is not pushy. He is patient. He avoids slandering or uttering obscenities. He does not unjustly accuse others of *fisq* or *kufr*. He is shy and modest. He does not interfere in that which does not concern him. He refrains from gossiping, spreading slander and stirring up trouble. He avoids false speech and suspicion. When he is entrusted with a secret, he keeps it and does not disclose it. He is modest and never arrogant. He does not make fun of anyone. He respects his elders and those who are distinguished. He mixes with the best of people. He is keen to do good to people and protect them from harm. He strives to reconcile between the Muslims. He calls others to the way of his Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching. He visits the sick and attends funerals. He returns favours and is grateful for them. He mixes with people and bears their mistreatment with patience. He tries to make people happy as much as he can. He guides people to do good. He always like to make things easy and not to make them hard. He is fair in his judgements. He does not oppress others or play favourites. He is not a hypocrite or a sycophant or a show-off. He does not boast about his deeds and

achievements. He is straightforward and is never devious or twisted, no matter what the circumstances. He loves noble things and hates foolishness. He does not exaggerate in his speech or puff up his cheek with pride. He is generous and does not remind others of his gifts or favours. He is hospitable and does not complain when a guest comes to him. He prefers others to himself as much as possible. He relieves the burden of the debtor. He is proud and does not think of begging. He knows that the upper hand is better than the lower. He gets along with people and they feel comfortable with him. He measures all of his habits and customs against Islamic standards. He follows Islamic etiquette in eating, drinking, giving *salām*, visiting people, entering their homes and sitting with them, and in other social activities.

This is the clear, beautiful picture of the Muslim whose personality has been formed by Islam and whose heart, mind and soul are filled with its divine light.

For man to reach this sublime level of noble virtues and morals and to translate them into a living reality on earth, is the greatest achievement for which systems, laws, philosophies and ideologies may strive. It surpasses all other scientific and materialistic achievements which are known in our world today, and which dazzle us with their lights and colours. Man is the noblest and most precious of creatures, and all of the past efforts to establish human cultures have been aimed solely at achieving his happiness and and elevating and honouring him. The way to honour him is by enhancing his humanity. The culture which concerns itself only with man's lower desires, without developing and purifying his human nature and awakening his potential for good, is a culture that is sorely lacking. It has failed to fufil the most important condition of human culture and has neglected the very humanity of man, which is his most valuable hidden asset.

All of the achievements and inventions of human civilization, such as cannons, missiles, satellites, transistors, television, video, etc., cannot replace the human aspect of man and indeed are worthless if they are not used to enhance his humanity, purify him and make him truly happy:

> **"By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it;**
> **And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right -**
> **Truly he succeeds that purifies it,**
> **And he fails that corrupts it!"**
> [*al-Shams* 91:7-10]

The development of a society is not measured solely in terms of its scientific achievements and material inventions. These are a factor, but there is another, more important, standard by which a society is also measured. That is the prevalence of human values such as love, empathy, altruism, sacrifice, uprightness and purity of thought, behaviour and dealings with others.

If individuals are the basis of a society, and the pillars upon which every social renaissance is built, then rightly-guided societies pay attention to human development and enhance the positive, constructive aspects while seeking to eliminate evil, destructive motives, so that the individual will become a model citizen. It is from groups of such model citizens that clean, civil, strong, healthy, righteous societies are formed.

The Islamic society is one which is integrated and of superior quality, and the Muslim in such a society is of the highest class because of the teachings of his religion which have instilled in him the highest and noblest human attitudes, and encouraged him to adhere to them in the field of social relationships.

The backwardness, division, hatred and cutting off of ties that we see occurring at all levels - international, regional and individual - among the Muslims are clear evidence of how Muslims are ignoring and neglecting the strong bonds of faith and brotherhood enjoined by Allah. Hence the misguided ideologies of *jāhiliyyah* arose in the Muslim lands, and we have been overwhelmed by imported foreign principles which have brought poison and disease, and have made us like debris floating on the floodwaters.

This would not have happened to the Muslims if their genuine Islamic identity and the purity of their intellectual and spiritual sources had been preserved.

The attack against the Muslim world was conducted on two fronts. One was an assault directed against the Islamic identity and aimed at distorting the Islamic personality. The other was aimed at polluting the intellectual and spiritual sources, and diverting Muslims towards other, alien, sources.

They managed in many Muslim lands to distort the Muslim identity and made the Muslims follow them like sheep in their intellectual matters and the way they behaved and felt. They deprived the Muslims of the values and morals of their religion, and took away the divine impetus which had brought them onto the stage of world history in such a remarkable fashion.

Nothing can restore the health and authenticity of the Muslim identity except a sincere return to the eternal way of Allah, and a deep understanding of the mission with which the Muslim has been entrusted. This will enable the Muslims to fulfil their duty of conveying this message to mankind, after they have adopted it for themselves as an ideology and way of life.

When our misguided ummah, which is lost in the mire of *jāhiliyyah*, subordination and tribalism, finally returns to the cool shade of Allah, it will once again be the free, strong, integrated, supportive, united *ummah* that will never be defeated. Then it will be the *ummah* of faith, and Allah has promised in the Qur'ān to support the *ummah* of faith:

> **"... and it was due from Us to aid those who believed."**
> [*al-Rūm* 30:47]

GLOSSARY

adhkār: plural of *dhikr*, q.v.

aḥādīth: plural of *ḥādīth*, q.v.

Allahu akbar: "Allah is most great".

Anṣār: (literally, "helpers"), the Muslim of Yathrib (Madīnah) who welcomed those who migrated from Makkah and helped them to settle in their new home.

'ashūrā': the tenth day of Muḥarram. It is a *sunnah* to fast on the ninth and tenth days of Muḥarram.

āyah: (literally, "sign") a "verse" of the Qur'ān.

bay'ah: oath of allegiance to the Prophet (SAAS) sworn by those who embraced Islam during his lifetime.

bid'ah: reprehensible innovation, the introduction of rites or beliefs into Islam which have no basis in the Qur'ān or Sunnah.

birr: righteousness, kindness, good treatment. This word is often used to describe the attitude that a Muslim should have towards his or her parents, which may be summed up as "filial piety."

dā'ī: (literally "caller), one who calls people to Islam

da‘wah: (literally, “invitation” or “call”), calling people to Islam

dhikr (plural, *adhkār*)**:** (literally “remembrance” i.e. of Allah). Remembering Allah should be a constant feature of the Muslim’s life. The Prophet (SAAS) also taught some phrases and prayers that help us to remember Allah.

ḍuḥā: an optional prayer performed at midmorning.

dunyā: this transient world, as opposed to the Hereafter.

du‘ā’: supplication, “private” or “informal” prayer, which may be in Arabic or one’s own language.

fajr: the early morning prayer, performed before sunrise.

fiqh: jurisprudence, the understanding and application of *sharī‘ah.*

fitnah: trial, temptation; tribulation, tumult.

fiṭrah: the natural state of man, which is Islam.

ghusl: full ablution.

ḥadīth (plural: *aḥādīth*): a saying or tradition of the Prophet (SAAS).

ḥadīth qudsī: (literally “sacred ḥadīth”) A ḥadīth containing words of Allah that were narrated by the Prophet (SAAS), but which do not form part of the Qur’ān.

ḥajj: pilgrimage to Makkah, performed once a year during the Islamic month of Dhū’l-Ḥjjah; this is one of the pillars of Islam,

and should be performed once in a lifetime by every Muslim who is able to do so.

ḥalāl: permitted, allowed

ḥarām: forbidden, prohibited.

ḥijāb: the Islamic dress-code and related attitudes. Although the word "ḥijāb" is often used by English-speaking Muslims to refer specifically to the head-covering, it in fact refers to the whole dress-code.

hijrah: migration for the sake of Allah. "The Hijrah" is the historic migration of the Prophet (SAAS) and his Companions from Makkah to Yathrib (Madīnah) but the word "hijrah" may describe any migration (for example, to find a better environment in which to practise Islam and raise children or to spread the message of Islam), that is undertaken for the sake of Allah. The Hijrah of the Prophet (SAAS) also marks the beginning of the Islamic or Hijrī calendar.

'iddah: "waiting period," usually three menstrual cycles, which a divorced woman must observe before she is free to remarry. The purpose is to establish whether she is pregnant with her ex-husband's child (if she were to remarry immediately, there is the possibility of doubt regarding the paternity of a child conceived immediately). If she is pregnant, her *'iddah* lasts until the baby is born.

imām: leader; may refer to the person who leads others in prayers, or to the ruler or leader of an Islamic state. The word is also used as a title of respect for eminent scholars.

iqāmah: call to prayer, similar to the *adhān*, that is given immediately before the prayer.

'ishā': the night-time prayer, performed after the sun has set.

isnād: "Chain of authority," the chain of people who conveyed a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet (SAAS). Scholars who specialized in *ḥadīth*, such as al-Bukhārī and Muslim, subjected the *isnād* of each *ḥadīth* they came across to intense scrutiny. Only if they were certain that each person in the *isnād* was competent and truthful, and that each had been in a position to meet and learn from or teach the next person in the chain, would the scholars accept a *ḥadīth* as being authentic.

i'tikāf: seclusion or spiritual retreat. It was the custom of the Prophet (SAAS) to spend the last ten days of Ramaḍān in seclusion, concentrating on prayer and worship.

jāhiliyyah: ignorance. The time preceding the revelation of Islam is known as the time of ignorance.

Jibrīl: the Archangel who conveyed the revelation of the Qur'ān to the Prophet (SAAS). The English version of his name is Gabriel.

jihād: (literally "struggle" or "striving"). Although this word is often translated as "holy war," it has a broader meaning than warfare on the battlefield. Any act of striving to please Allah may be described as jihād.

jinn: created beings made from smokeless fire. In many ways they are a parallel creation to humans, as there are Muslims and kāfirs among them, they are born, have children and die, etc. They can see us, but we cannot see them. Trying to see or contact them

is forbidden, and Muslims are encouraged to protect themselves by constantly remembering Allah.

jumu'ah: Friday, the Muslim day of gathering when men have to go to the mosque to hear the khuṭbah and pray the congregational prayer. (Attendance is optional for women.)

kāfir: disbeliever, one who rejects the truth.

khalīfah: successor or vicegerent. Specifically, it refers to the Muslim ruler.

khuṭbah: speech, address or sermon, especially that given at Friday and Eid prayers.

kufr: disbelief, rejection of the truth.

kunyah: agnomen beginning with Abu or Umm (father of, mother of) and the name of the oldest child or more frequently, the name of the oldest son. This is an ancient Arabic custom which was continued in Islam and adopted by other people who became Muslim. The *kunyah* of the Prophet (SAAS) was Abū'l-Qāsim.

lā ilāha ill-Allah: "There is no god but Allah." The fundamental declaration of Tawḥīd, the central tenet of Islam.

laylat al-qadr: The "Night of Power," one of the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramaḍān. It is not known precisely which night it is. The Qur'ān describes it as "better than a thousand months" [al-Qadr 97:3]. Muslims concentrate on worship and reading the Qur'ān during this ten-day period, seeking the blessing of this special time.

mufassir: Qur'ānic exegete, a scholar who comments on and explains the meanings of the Qur'ān. Many scholars have written such works, known as Tafsīr. Famous books of Tafsīr include those by Ibn Kathīr, Sayyid Qutb and Maulana Mawdudi, parts of which are available in English translation.

Muhājir: migrants, one who migrates for the sake of Allah. The original Muhājirīn were the Muslims who migrated from Makkah to Yathrib (Madīnah).

Muḥarram: the first month of the Islamic calendar.

munāfiq: hypocrite, one who pretends to believe in Islam, but does not.

mushrik: polytheist, one who associates others in worship with Allah.

nāfil: supererogatory or optional prayers, fasts, etc., that may be performed in addition to those that are obligatory.

qāḍī: judge in a sharī'ah court.

qiblah: the direction faced when praying, i.e., the direction of the Ka'bah in Makkah.

qiyām al-layl: standing in prayer during the night.

rak'ah: a "unit" or "cycle" of prayer, consisting of standing and reciting Surat al-Fātiḥah, bowing, standing upright again, then kneeling and prostrating twice. Prayers consist of two, three or four *rak'ahs*.

ribā: usury, interest.

Ṣaḥābah: the Companions of the Prophet (SAAS)

Ṣaḥābī : singular of Ṣaḥābah.

ṣaḥīḥ: with reference to *aḥādīth*, sound, authentic

salaf: the early generations of Muslims, i.e., the Companions of the Prophet (SAAS) and the two generations immediately following them.

ṣalāt: the "formal" prayer which is to be offered five times daily.

al-ṣalāt al-Ibrāhīmiyyah: the final part of the prayer, in which the Muslim prays to Allah to bless Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) and his family as He blessed Prophet Ibrāhīm (AS) and his family.

sharī'ah: Islamic law

shirk: polytheism, the sin of associating anything in worship with Allah. This is the only sin for which there will be no forgiveness: if a person dies as a mushrik, he is truly doomed.

sīrah: biography, specifically that of the Prophet (SAAS).

siwāk: a small stick which comes from a specific tree and is used as a toothbrush. In the West, *siwāk* may be purchased at Islamic bookstores and ḥalāl grocery stores.

ṣubḥ: another name for *fajr* (early morning) prayer.

suḥūr: the pre-dawn meal eaten before fasting.

tabarruj: wanton display, flaunting oneself in contradiction to the Islamic rulings on dress and modest behaviour.

tahajjud: voluntary prayer that is performed at night between the times of *'ishā'* and *fajr*.

tajwīd: correct recitation of Qur'ān, following precise rules of pronunciation and articulation.

takbīr: saying "Allahu akbar."

taqwā: piety, "God-consciousness." Taqwā involves constant awareness and remembrance of Allah, and conscious efforts to adhere to His commandments and abstain from whatever He has forbidden.

Tarāwīḥ: extra prayers that are performed after 'ishā' during Ramaḍān. They are usually performed in congregation and as much of the Qur'ān as possible is recited during these prayers.

taṣbīh: saying "*ṣubḥān-Allah*" ("Glory be to Allah").

'ulamā' (singular: *'ālim*): scholars, people of knowledge.

ummah: community or nation, the body of Muslims as a distinct and integrated entity. The ummah of Islam is not based on language, race or ethnicity, but encompasses everyone who believes in Allah alone and in the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAAS).

'umrah: the "lesser pilgrimage," consisting of fewer rites than Ḥajj. *'Umrah* may be performed at any time of the year.

waḥy: revelation, inspiration.

wājib: obligatory, compulsory.

witr: a prayer which has an odd number of *rak'ahs*. It is offered last thing at night before sleeping, or following *tahajjud*.

wuḍū': "partial" ablution which is required before prayer if one has passed wind, urine or stools.

Yawm 'Arafāh: the 9th day of the Islamic month of Dhū'l-Ḥijjah. In the most essential part of Ḥajj, the pilgrims spend this day standing and praying at 'Arafāh, a mountain and plain outside Makkah. Muslims who are not on Ḥajj may observe this sacred day by fasting (this fast is optional but is encouraged).

zakāt: "poor-due" or "charity-tax." Muslims whose wealth is above a certain limit must pay a percentage of it (2.5%) to the poor and needy. *Zakāt* is one of the pillars of Islam.

ẓulm: oppression, wrongdoing.

The following abbreviations are also used in this book:

(SAAS): *ṣall-Allahu 'alyahi wa sallam*: May Allah bless him and grant him peace (said following mention of Prophet Muhammad)

(AS): *'alayhi's-salām*: Peace be upon him (said following mention of Prophets or the names of angels).

(RA): *raḍiy Allahu 'anhu/'anhā/'anhum*: May Allah be pleased with him/her/them (said following mention of the Prophet's Companions and wives).